

# UTAH

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**O**n *the Way to Somewhere Else*, the title of one of the books reviewed in this issue of the *Utah Historical Quarterly*, is an appropriate theme for this last issue of 2006. Many of life's challenges and changes come from the journeys we undertake. Journeys begin with the hope and expectation that the intended destination will be reached, but, given the vagaries of life, there is no guarantee.

Such was the case for Albert King Thurber. Infected with "gold fever" after the news of the discovery of gold in California reached the East Coast, Thurber left his native New England in March 1849 with a group of like-stricken countrymen. Not all reached California. The original group, like many emigrant parties, fractured and splintered under the tremendous forces of hardship, individualism, disagreement, and contention. After Thurber arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, his conversion to Mormonism was quick and enduring. He remained in Utah to become a prominent settler, church leader, and politician during the next four decades of his life. Thurber's journey westward in 1849, described in our first article, offers a vivid account of one man's experience in setting out for one destination and discovering another.

After the initial gold rush of 1849, California continued to attract emigrants and none are more famous in Utah history than the members of the ill-fated Fancher party who were massacred at Mountain Meadows in southwestern Utah on September 11, 1857. Our second article examines the confessions of fourteen participants in the massacre and provides a





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summary of what the confessions reveal about the tragic event.

The death of one hundred twenty members of the Arkansas emigrant group at Mountain Meadows is an unfortunate yet unique episode in the story of emigrant travel through the region. Thousands of other nineteenth century emigrants passed through Utah without harm or difficulty on their way to someplace else. The written accounts of some of these travelers offer an interesting perspective on Salt Lake City during its formative first two decades. The contemporary accounts included in our third article describe the city's buildings and landscape, trade, visits with Brigham Young, polygamy, Pioneer Day celebrations, and religious services.

Bruce Johnson arrived in Salt Lake City in 1890 and remained in Utah until 1907. An African American, possibly a slave, born in Little Rock, Arkansas, about 1850, Johnson mounted the stage of Utah politics to wield power and influence at a time when racism and discrimination blanketed America. His remarkable story and his impact on Utah are discussed in our final article for 2006.

***Two sketches of Salt Lake City from the Utah State Historical Society Collection. The first dates from the early 1850s and was made by an artist who did not visit the Salt Lake Valley. The second, a more accurate portrayal of the city, was made in the late 1860s.***

***ON THE COVER: Salt Lake City residents pose in front of Eagle Gate just east of Brigham Young's Beehive House in South Temple Street.*** LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES



THE LONG ISLAND MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART AND HISTORY

## Rhode Island 49er Albert King Thurber's Gold Rush Journey That Ended in Utah

By WILLIAM G. HARTLEY

**A**lbert King Thurber made imprints in Utah history from 1849 to 1888 through his work as a settler, mayor, county selectman, long-time territorial legislator, ranking militia officer, intermediary with Native Americans, and a church leader. In his later years, he wrote an extensive autobiography (including diary entries) telling about his productive life.<sup>1</sup> A Rhode Islander, Thurber did not come to Utah because he was a Mormon or in any emigrating companies. Rather, he reached Utah as a forty-niner bound for the California gold fields, and opted to stop and stay in Utah.

At the age of twenty-three Thurber joined thousands who hoped to find quick wealth in the California gold fields and then return

*This oil on canvas painting by William Sidney Mount in 1850 is entitled "California News."*

William G. Hartley is an associate professor of history at Brigham Young University, where he teaches Utah history and writing family biographical history courses. He is founding president of the Mormon Trails Association, former president of the Mormon History Association, and has published widely about Utah, Mormon, and overland trails history.

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Albert King Thurber, Typescript, 81 pp., copied "from Mr. Thurber's original ledger" by Charles Kelly, 1952, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Thurber's handwritten journal, long missing, has been recently located. Because it is not available for research, citations here are from the typescript, cited hereafter as Thurber Typescript. Whenever Thurber is quoted, in a few cases where the original journal differs from the typescript, the journal version is used. The author is writing a biography of Mr. Thurber, and this essay expands upon a draft chapter in that book manuscript.

home. In March 1849, in Boston he signed up with the Congress and California Joint-Stock Mining Company, erroneously named by some histories the Congress and California Mutual Protection Association.<sup>2</sup> What follows is the story of Albert King Thurber's involvements in the 1849 gold rush hysteria, the organizing of a forty-niner company, its personnel, their long crossing of the United States, their internal bickering on the Oregon-California Trail, their days in Utah, and Thurber's decision to quit the venture and make Utah his home.

Albert King Thurber was born on April 7, 1826, in Foster, Rhode Island, the son of Daniel and Rebecca Thurber. In his boyhood he received limited common school education. At age nine he left home to live with an uncle in nearby West Killingly, Connecticut, where he helped in the stable and as a jockey, acquiring some knowledge of horses and horsemanship. He also learned the trade of comb-maker. In 1844, he worked in Pomfret Village, Connecticut, taking care of horses, harnesses, and carriages. He attended the Episcopalian church. A year later while tending a bar room, tavern, and store, he studied mathematics, geography, and writing. He later moved to Leominster, Massachusetts, where for nearly a year he worked in a comb factory. He soon left New England and moved to Auburn, New York, where he established a comb-making business. There he joined the Auburn Guards, a state military company, and "became proficient in company drill," training that later served him well in Utah's Nauvoo Legion. He spent the winter of 1848-49 again in Leominster making combs, and, as he wrote "did very well."<sup>3</sup>

Late in the summer of 1848 news reached the states about the gold discoveries at John Sutter's millrace near Sacramento.<sup>4</sup> While some caught gold fever right away, most, like Thurber, read, listened, and waited. To head for California a man had to have "evidence strong enough to justify to wives and creditors, parents and business partners the expense and the danger of the long journey."<sup>5</sup> Thurber and other New Englanders had learned a little about distant Mexican California from Yankee hide-and-tallow crews, news reports about the Donner Party tragedy, and the Mexican War reports telling how Americans defeated the Mexicans and took control of California.

<sup>2</sup> Octavius Thorndike Howe, *Argonauts of '49: History and Adventures of the Emigrant Companies from Massachusetts, 1849-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923), 41-43, 192. A participant's partial account of that company's journey has been published, but Thurber's recollections about that venture have not. Louise Barry compiled diary notes and published recollections of participant Charles Robinson, which she published as "Charles Robinson--Yankee Forty-niner: His Journey to California," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 34 (1968):179-88.

<sup>3</sup> Thurber Typescript, 1-17, quote is on p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Excellent overviews of the gold rush story are found in J. S. Holliday: *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), and *Rush for Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: Oakland Museum of California and University of California, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 45-48.

President James K. Polk did as much as anyone to inspire the gold lust. Early in December 1848, he delivered a convincing message to Congress about the abundance of gold in California, which was "corroborated by authentic reports of officers in the public service."<sup>6</sup> When the War Department put California gold on display, people became even more enthusiastic. The "spirit of emigration" to California "expands every day," the *New York Herald* trumpeted on January 11, 1849.<sup>7</sup> Powerful incentives appeared in letters from the gold fields to friends and relatives back home, which local newspapers printed with relish.

"The California gold mines were attracting attention," Thurber recalled, "and I took the fever." He was young and single and thus able to pull up stakes easily. As a young man facing choices about life careers, and tired of comb factory work, he was open to new possibilities, including quick wealth. Added to this possibility of wealth, Thurber was apparently emotionally hurt when Lucy Cranston spurned his efforts to court and marry her. Perhaps he wanted distance, or perhaps wealth enough to impress her and win her heart.<sup>8</sup>

New Englanders and others had three options for reaching the gold fields: by ship around Cape Horn; by ship to Panama and across the isthmus overland and by ship again to California; or, three thousand miles across the continent. By early 1849 tens of thousands of Americans prepared to go overland rather than by sea, planning to leave as soon as spring dried the routes and sprouted grasses for cattle to feed on. Of the 124 Massachusetts companies that left in 1849, most went by ship. Only nine went overland and six of those used the South Pass route, including the company Thurber joined.<sup>9</sup> "We organised in Boston under the name of Congress & California Joint-Stock Mining Company," Thurber wrote, whose leader was Major John Webber Jr. of Roxbury.<sup>10</sup> (Other accounts mistakenly call it by a later name that a segment of the party adopted after they split apart in Missouri--the "Congress and California Mutual Protective Association" or the "Congress and California Protective Association.")<sup>11</sup>

Many who headed west were from towns and cities and lacked

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 48-49.

<sup>8</sup> Thurber Typescript, 17.

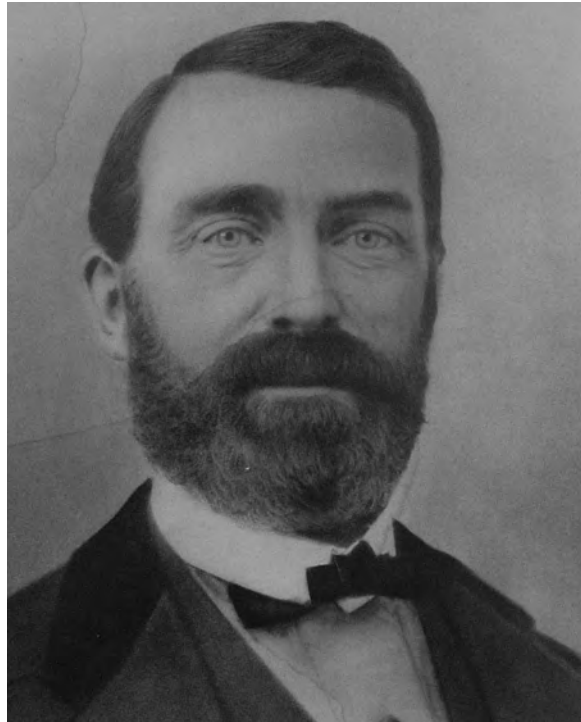
<sup>9</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 187-212. The six companies that used South Pass in 1849 were: Congress and California Joint-Stock Mining Company, Sagamore and Sacramento Company, Boston and Newton Joint Stock Association, Granite State and California Mining and Trading Company, Mt. Washington Company, and the Ophir Company. A sampling of accounts about these companies includes the following: Jesse Gould Hannon, ed., *The Boston-Newton Company Venture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969); and Joseph Sedgley, *Overland to California in 1849* (Oakland: 1877); for the Sagamore Company of Lynn, Massachusetts, Joseph A. Stuart, *My Roving Life*, vol. 1 (Auburn, CA: 1895); and Kimball Webster, *The Goldseekers of '49* (Manchester NH: 1917) deals with the Granite State and California Mining and Trading Company; Milton Milo Quafe, ed, *Across the Plains in Forty-nine* (New York: 1966) for the Mount Washington Mining Company, a Boston outfit.

<sup>10</sup> Thurber Typescript, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 179-88; Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 192.

knowledge of camping and outdoor living, “men of a soft generation, far removed from the frontier....and never having known war.”<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, men joined together more as ambitious businessmen than as care-free adventurers. It was natural for men from the same cities and towns to organize themselves into joint-stock companies, each member paying into a fund a like amount for the company to purchase wagons, teams, and provisions. These companies created rules and regulations and elected officers. Some companies dressed in uniforms. Many gold seekers mortgaged or



MARYANNE ASHTON

sold their homes, drained their savings accounts, or borrowed from relatives and friends. Thurber invested at least three hundred dollars in his company, an equivalent to about \$7,600 in current dollars.<sup>13</sup>

Before leaving for the gold fields of California in March 1849, Thurber visited his family for the last time and had his picture taken twice for them. His mother became emotional and extracted a promise from him: “I promised to return in one year. She said she did not want to see me return ragged and clasped me around the neck and wept. I had to brace my heart against this maternal affection to prevent shedding tears.” His stoic father confessed “that if he was as young as I was, he believed that he would do as I was doing... as we were walking down the street, he cast his eyes up to the sun, and said that it was time he was going home and said, Boy, now all the advice I have to give you is to behave yourself as well as you know how, and left.”<sup>14</sup>

At Leominster, Massachusetts, Thurber and two others made final arrangements for their trip. “Three of us got a sea chest,” he wrote, “and

<sup>12</sup> George R. Stewart, *The California Trail* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 220.

<sup>13</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 51-52. John J. McCusker, “Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money in the United States (or Colonies) from 1665 to 2005” Economic History Services, 2006, URL: <http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd> accessed August 14, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Thurber Typescript, 17-18.



packed it full of such good substantial clothing as we though[t] we should need & sent it to Sacramento, via Cape Horn."<sup>15</sup> At Boston, Thurber and his friends joined their emigration company. Members paid an assessment that created a cash pool from which the company could purchase wagons, equipment, and supplies.<sup>16</sup> According to Thurber, his company consisted of forty-four men, mostly from Boston and Roxbury. Dr. Charles Robinson, one of the members, said fifty men were in the group, "men of all classes and professions," including tradesmen, clerks, manufacturers, farmers, and laborers.<sup>17</sup> Of the six Massachusetts companies that went west by way of South Pass, Thurber's was "one of the largest and best appointed."<sup>18</sup> Its officers were: Maj. John Webber Jr. from Boston and president and captain; Maj. N. A. M. Dudley also from Boston who was elected vice-president and 1st Lt.; Col. Darlington of Leominster, adjutant; Otis Stevens from Roxbury, Commissary; Charles Pearson also from Roxbury, Quartermaster; Capt. R. Nichols, Boston, Treasurer, and Dr. Charles Robinson from Fitchburg, surgeon for the company.<sup>19</sup> Twelve in the company had been members of the Massachusetts militia. The group also included four musicians, two black servants, and six dogs. The officers dressed in navy blue uniforms, while the non-commissioned officers and privates, including Thurber, donned light grey uniforms banded with gold. If like other companies heading for the gold, the men in Thurber's company armed themselves with rifles, revolvers, bowie knives, and sabers. They left "uniformed and armed," Thurber said.<sup>20</sup>

Thurber and his new associates left Boston on March 19, 1849. "All went merry as a 'Marriage Bell' along the railroad and steamboat lines," Thurber noted. Traveling by railroad and canal boat, their plan was to go to St. Louis by way of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.<sup>21</sup> At Baltimore he was chosen to be a member of an advance party of eight to purchase wagons. The advance party left the main company and boarded stagecoaches to cross the Allegheny Mountains to reach Pittsburgh.<sup>22</sup>

Forty-niner stories favor the western trails saga, often making short shrift of the hard and sometimes adventurous travels they endured to cross "the States" to the outfitting posts. Thurber's advance party traveled part way by primitive and risky stagecoach. "At the first stopping place some 10 miles up the mountain I did not like the looks of the crowd around the station.... As we had a plenty of Blankets, I proposed to sleep out,--which to us Yankees was a novelty, but agreed to. We guarded our baggage all night."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.; and Barry, "Charles Robinson," 179.

<sup>17</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 179.

<sup>18</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>20</sup> Thurber Typescript, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The next morning where they tried to eat breakfast, the men were victimized because of bad feelings the stagecoach driver felt towards the tavern keeper. "Very early I went across the street and engaged breakfast at a tavern," Thurber said, "and just as it was ready the driver's horn blowed. I profered full [pay], but the land lord would only take half pay for the untouched meal, saying that they had played that trick many times on those who attempted to patronize him."<sup>23</sup>

Back on board, the group traveled about three more miles to a tavern in the woods where the driver stopped to have his team watered. Once again, he did not want his passengers slowing him down by stopping for breakfast. "We all got out and I ordered Breakfast," Thurber wrote, and when the men "invited the driver to get down & have something to drink & told the ostler [hostler or innkeeper] to take care of the team," the driver "ranted" and made some excuse about urgency to move the U.S. mail ahead immediately. This time, "We told him that if he did it would be on foot for we intended to keep the coach and that he had better cool down untill we got Breakfast." They had gone without food before boarding the stage, spent a wakeful night guarding their baggage, and slept outdoors, all of which "had made us cross." When the driver saw their determination, he "contented himself very uneasily untill we got a good breakfast."<sup>24</sup>

Travel by stage was slow. "We were a number of Days getting to Brownsville," Thurber recalled, because of muddy roads, balky horses, and "Drunken drivers." From Brownsville the men proceeded north thirty miles to Pittsburgh. During his two days there, Thurber attended a small theater before he was "sent forward" down the Ohio River some one hundred miles to Wheeling, Virginia (later West Virginia), to make currency exchanges and buy wagons. "Had a fine river ride," Thurber recalled. At Wheeling he "put up at a public house where I stayed nearly one week." While there, he exchanged five hundred dollars in eastern bank notes for western ones, gaining a premium of one cent per dollar in the exchange. He purchased two wagons, and then waited for his company to arrive. When they failed to show at Wheeling, Thurber returned to Pittsburgh where the main part of the company from Boston had just caught up with his advance group.<sup>25</sup>

At Pittsburgh the company booked passage to western Missouri on the New Orleans river steamer *Ne Plus Ultra*, with a captain Philips in command. They took aboard—not easily—seven mules they had purchased in Pittsburgh. "As none of the company had ever used and scarcely seen Quadrupeds our way of managing them was somewhat amusing," Thurber confessed. "In getting them on board of the steam boat, they refused to cheerfully walk the gangplank, when we immediately threw them down

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 18-19

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 19

and packed them on board amid roars of laughter from the Bystanders and kicks from the mules."<sup>26</sup> At Wheeling, they loaded on the boat the two wagons Thurber had purchased. During a stop at Cincinnati, Dr. Robinson bought a horse and a clarinet. At Cairo, Illinois, and elsewhere along the rivers, Thurber "found that many people were dying with the Cholera."<sup>27</sup> While traveling on the river Dr. Robinson tried to treat the victims, although he had never dealt with cholera before.<sup>28</sup> At the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the boat turned north and steamed up the Mississippi to St. Louis. At St. Louis the company bought supplies, which they took on board a Missouri River steamboat that carried them up the Missouri River and across the width of the state to Kansas City.

In addition to dreaded cholera, riverboat travel on this leg of the journey was unpleasant for Thurber and the others as an unruly group of gamblers dominated travel conditions. "[I]t was one continual scene of gambling, cursing and swearing," wrote Thurber. Further, he suspected that a dying man he helped while the boat was passing between St. Louis and Jefferson City was a murder victim:

One night, a strange passenger was taken singularly sick with severe spasms and as he was alone, I, and, one of our co. Frank Leget[t] took it in hand to take care of him. We called the Doctor of our company who said to us privately that the man was poisoned. Said that there was little chance for him to live. His distress increased until morning when he got a little easy. He thanked us for our kindness. Said that he was going to die and advised us to avoid bad company as the keeping of it was being the cause of his death. Said his name was Wright from Indiana. Mourned much about his mother. He was a milwright & a verry strong athletic man. When again atacked with spasms he had to be confined with strong ropes and died about noon in awful agony.<sup>29</sup>

Thurber and the others in his company made a coffin for the dead man and buried him at Jefferson City. The gamblers never noticed him or stopped their game when he was dying within six feet of them. It was supposed the gamblers and the bartenders were accomplices and drugged liquors for him and secured his money.

Resuming the upriver journey, Thurber and the others "had a hard time in getting to Kansas City," Thurber said, "in consequence of sand bars and snags."<sup>30</sup> The riverboat reached Kansas (now Kansas City), Missouri, on April 10, 1849, three weeks after Thurber's group had left Boston. Kansas (City) was an emerging town on the Missouri River that had an "unequaled" natural rock landing for steamboats. It had been called Westport Landing, because it was the point from which Westport, an important outfitting town a few miles inland, received river goods.<sup>31</sup> Once

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 180.

<sup>29</sup> Thurber Typescript, 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>31</sup> W. H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City* (Kansas City, Missouri: Birdsall & Miller, 1881), 38-42.

## Forty-niners' Route, Westport to Great Salt Lake City



GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Brandon Plewe, BYU Geography

ashore, the four dozen-plus men from Massachusetts became mere specks among thousands already there trying to complete outfits before hurrying west for the gold. By mid-April some thirty thousand gold seekers had reached the Missouri River outfitting towns of Independence, Westport, Kansas (City), Weston, St. Joseph, and others. They camped in the outskirts of these western towns while buying wagons and livestock and supplies, and waiting for word that the trails were dry enough to travel and prairie grass sprouting enough for livestock to feed on.<sup>32</sup>

**Map of the route of Albert King  
Thurber to Utah in 1849.**

Dr. Robinson recalled the accommodations at Kansas (City) while waiting for the trail conditions to improve:

We take our meals (about 40 of us,) at a log hotel [the Kansas House], for two dollars a week per head, and sleep in a storage building, finding our own beds. Our fare is chiefly bacon, or smoked pork--sides and all--bread and molasses, and eggs, with occasionally a taste of fresh beef. There are better hotels in the place, but this is near the landing, and the warehouse where our 'Plunder,' as the Missourians call our baggage, is stored, and hence we patronize it.<sup>33</sup>

The small town contained three hotels—one of logs, one of brick, and one of timber, several stores, and a school house, which served as a church

<sup>32</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 87.

<sup>33</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 180. A description of Kansas (City) the next year included four immense warehouses, several mills, shops and stores, the "magnificent" hotel, the "Troost House." Surrounding the town were "well stocked farms that sold livestock and produce," and an excellent road then led from the Missouri River to the town of Westport and beyond to the open prairie. See *A Missouri Republican* in 1850, quoted in A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *K. C.: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), 8.



on Sundays. About eight hundred people lived there, in houses made of logs, brick, framed timber, or boards.

Thurber's compatriots, New Englanders all, could not help but notice pronounced cultural differences between the society they had left and the southern ways so noticeable in Missouri, including slavery. "While laying at Kansas, I went across the river in co with [Frank] Legett," Thurber recalled, "and travailed two days into Missouri in order to see the country and people, the first was good, the latter we came to the conclusion was Hard stock."<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after Thurber's company arrival in Kansas (City), members of the company became dissatisfied with their boarding arrangement. The landlord of the Kansas House had been drunk for several days, and on April 17 the company met and voted that each man receive two dollars per week to use for lodging wherever he chose. Dr. Robinson and ten others moved to a farmhouse three miles from town and lodged for \$1.50 per week.<sup>35</sup> This was yet another indication of mutiny within the company. The historical records do not reveal where Thurber lodged.

Dr. Robinson later said that even before the group disembarked at Kansas (City), "the officers in control were subjects of suspicion, jealousies, innuendoes, reflections, and open charges of incapacity, inefficiency, crookedness, theft, and robbery."<sup>36</sup> A bigger point of contention was whether to use oxen or mules to pull their wagons. Fourteen members of the company favored ox-drawn wagons, and chose Thomas F Dana as their captain to lead the ox-drawn wagons. Dr. Robinson went with them. Three or four members decided to turn back while the rest of the company, including Thurber and twenty-three others, retained Captain Webber as their leader and organized a wagon company using mules.<sup>37</sup>

Squabbles about transport animals were typical at the outfitting camps and frequently divided organized companies, including Thurber's. Oxen cost between forty and fifty dollars per yoke but mules cost much more, from fifty to seventy dollars each. Better than half the forty-niner wagon companies chose oxen.<sup>38</sup> When Thurber's group split, "tons of supplies" had to be divided up. The two parties organized themselves while Dr. Robinson and two others apportioned out the company's materials. The men spent four or five weeks making the division and buying teams, delaying their departures until May 1.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Thurber Typescript, 20-21.

<sup>35</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 182.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Among those who turned back, Thurber said, was their company clerk, Bob Nichols, formerly of the *Boston Courier* office. "I always thought that he swindled the company out of \$2,000.00, which probably set him up and made him popular after the manner of the world, as he was afterwards a member of the Massachusetts legislature." Thurber Typescript, 20

<sup>38</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 89.

<sup>39</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 180.



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About the time the men left the Kansas House, cholera broke out in town and ten people died in one night. Dr. Robinson's services again were in great demand. "We had one man die with cholera," Thurber said, "and concluded to move camp to West Port on the prairie"—four miles south of Kansas (City) and away from the river bottoms. Thurber had been at Westport for two days when "there was a perfect stampede of the citizens of Kansas City for the prairie country or anywhere to get off the river." Three days later, he and Charles Tyler visited the town "and did not see a living soul in it."<sup>40</sup>

***Engraving of the Westport***

***Landing at Kansas City ca. 1848***

Thurber's reduced company, renamed the "Congress and California Mutual Protective Association" or abbreviated to the "Congress and California Protective Association," bought their outfits in Westport. It was an enterprising town, with busy blacksmiths, saddlers, and other mechanics "with nearly everything needed for an outfit to California."<sup>41</sup> At Westport the Congress and California Protective Association purchased thirty Spanish mules from the Sac and Fox Indians camped nearby. For several days, the men spent time "in fitting up," smoking meat, making wagon bows, and breaking in the mules.<sup>42</sup>

During April and May, thousands in wagon companies, mule pack trains, and individually started west from "jumping off" points along the Missouri

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. and Thurber Typescript, 20–21.

<sup>41</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 182.

<sup>42</sup> Thurber Typescript, 20–21.

River.<sup>43</sup> Some estimates indicated that as many as twenty-five thousand California-bound gold seekers took the South Pass route, bound for the west coast in 1849.<sup>44</sup> Those companies leaving from Westport, including Thurber's company, followed a route then known as the Oregon Trail. They first moved along the Santa Fe Trail southwesterly, on the divide between the Kansas and Osage rivers, to the road's junction with the "Independence Road" (near present-day Gardner, Kansas). That road took Thurber's company and hordes of others up along the Kaw or Kansas River, crossing it in the vicinity of present Topeka, then northwest to cross the Red Vermillion and Black Vermillion to reach the Big Blue near today's Marysville, Kansas. Near there the roads from Leavenworth and St. Joseph merged into their road. At that point, as of 1849, the combined route was termed the California Trail. From there, travelers followed along the Little Blue River northwesterly (into present-day Nebraska) and until they reached the Platte River just east of New Fort Kearny.<sup>45</sup> There, at least five trails merged to become the Oregon-California Trail until western Wyoming. Historian Merrill Mattes labels the segment from New Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie "The Great Platte River Road."<sup>46</sup>

On May 10, the two segments of Thurber's old company were ready to start the journey.<sup>47</sup> "Both the mules and oxen were unbroken to the harness or yoke, with few exceptions," Dr. Robinson recalled, "as were most of the men in the parties unused to handling them." Their efforts "in hitching up, starting and driving these wild animals afforded much amusement as well as many hard knocks."<sup>48</sup>

Disagreements within Thurber's company continued. Because of the discord and the company's poor judgment, Thurber threatened to drop out: "I proposed that if they would let me have one mule (cost \$34.00) and one hundred lbs. of provisions that I would make over to the co all my interest amounting to \$275.00." The men refused Thurber's proposal. "I told them

<sup>43</sup> The primary "jumping off" points were Independence, Westport, Weston/Fort Leavenworth, St. Joseph, Old Fort Kearney/ Nebraska City, and Council Bluffs. For more information see Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969), 103-29. A fine study of the mass migration west is found in John D. Unruh Jr., *The Plains Across* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

<sup>44</sup> Brigham D. Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners in Great Salt Lake City* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 12. Dale L. Morgan created a bibliography of 134 diaries kept by travelers who went west through South Pass in 1849, see Dale L. Morgan, ed., *The Overland Diary of James A. Pritchard from Kentucky to California in 1849* (Denver: Old West Publishing Company, 1959).

<sup>45</sup> Between 1846 and 1848 Fort Kearny operated where Nebraska City, Nebraska, is currently located, on the Missouri River. Because it was not located on the mainstream of the trail, a new site and fort were established near present-day Kearney, Nebraska (the city added an "e" to its name). Hence, Old Fort Kearny and New Fort Kearny designations.

<sup>46</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 8. Route details from Westport to Fort Kearny are extensively documented in Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Tucson: The Patrice Press, 1997), 48, 69-175.

<sup>47</sup> Barry, *Charles Robinson*, 192. Thurber incorrectly stated that his group got off in April. See Thurber Typescript, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 183

that I loved peace and had made the proposition in order to have it, but if they would not grant for me to leave, I should take the liberty of freely expressing my opinion at any and all times. I told them that with the present arrangement, we would never see California." He then lectured them about freighting West with "cast iron gold washers, an enormous amount of India rubber hoes picks spades & shovels untill our loads were as much as the little Spanish mules could start, and most of the co had an enormous amt of clothing." He advised the others "to lighten up in the beginning and not work our teams down and then be obliged to stop and only have poor teams left." But, they shrugged off his admonitions. "They could not see the propriety of such councils prevailing, and I did not expect they would for what idea could a lot of merchants counter Jumpers Jewelers Doctors & lawyers have of mules & loads?"<sup>49</sup>

As these New Englanders cut northwest across what is now eastern Kansas, they were impressed by the "boundless and ever-varying prairie" they crossed, as well as the rich soil. The quiet of the prairie was broken with the cooing of prairie hens, loud cawing of crows, the "sweet voices" of small birds, and the calls of wild geese.<sup>50</sup> Thurber and most forty-niners failed to see "wild Indians" as they crossed Indian country. "We travailed on," Thurber wrote, "pulling or rather stalling through mud & water for one month & 5 days to get to [Fort] Karney," which was their first major stop on the trail.<sup>51</sup>

During those five travel weeks "I was mad nearly all the time," Thurber noted. One who riled him most was the company's captain, John Webber:

Once, as we were pulling the wagons out of a mud hole, I invited Cap Weber who was sitting on a fine mare with Kid gloves on to get down into the mud and help us get the wagons out, telling him that I did not know as any one in the company had arranged to be his servant across the plains. He got mad and as he was a fighting man at home many of the co expected to see me thrashed but he was wise enough to keep hands off. I always felt that I could whip a mean man.<sup>52</sup>

Fort Kearny, "an infant of a post," was on the south shore of the broad Platte River, near the head or upriver end of Grand Island. On May 31, George Harker noted that "not a stick of timber can be seen on this side of the river....There are about twenty occupied houses at the Fort, all constructed of mud cut in oblong blocks from the prairie, and roofed with

<sup>49</sup> Thurber Typescript, 21. With few exceptions, most companies of forty-niners leaving the Missouri outfitting towns had overloaded their wagons by trying to haul "extra axletrees and wheels, sheet-iron stoves, anvils, chains, personal clothing, boxes of medicines, shovels, pickaxes and gold-washing machines; and quantities of foodstuffs--barrels of flour, sacks of sugar, salt, cornmeal, beans, coffee, salt pork and saleratus." Then, "under the traffic of hundreds of wagons pulled by six and even eight oxen or mules, the trails became deeply rutted, in some places quagmires." Axles on overloaded wagons broke and wheel rims tore loose from spokes. Some wagons sank too deep in trail mud to be pulled out and had to be abandoned. Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 111.

<sup>50</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 184.

<sup>51</sup> Thurber Typescript, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



poles and mud. The fort, wrote William Swain on June 14 "is built of turfs and covered with bushes and sods for roofs. . . . There are some one hundred and twenty troops stationed here, all busily engaged in building the fort." The fort, he said, had a store, blacksmith shop, horse powered saw mill, and a boarding house run by a Mormon family named Knowlton.<sup>53</sup> Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville was in command.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Dana's oxen company beat Thurber's company to Fort Kearny, arriving on June 3. There they abandoned their wagons "for a song," and they, too, became a pack mule company. The change in the means of transportation forced Dana's company to throw away five hundred pounds of bacon and bread and large quantities of flour and beans. "There is more clothing on the ground at Fort Kearney that would fill the largest store in Boston," a Dana company member said.<sup>55</sup> At the fort they cooked one meal on fuel that was one of the wagons they had bought brand new back east.

Thurber's company reached Fort Kearny a few days later. Trail expert Merrill Mattes estimated that of approximately thirty thousand people who "swarmed up the Platte River valley" that year, twenty-five thousand passed by Fort Kearny, the other five thousand used the north side of the Platte. Near the fort, various trails from the Missouri River converged and formed "the main line of the Great Platte River Road."<sup>56</sup> On June 13 the Sagamore Company from Lynn, Massachusetts, arrived at the fort. Joseph Sedgley, in that company, noted that in the prior two weeks they had passed the Boston and Newton Company as well as companies from New York, Illinois, Mississippi, Michigan, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Wisconsin.<sup>57</sup> By June 23, army officers at Fort Kearny had counted 5,516 wagons bound for the Far West, accounting for at least twenty-nine thousand travelers on the trail to that point in time.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 135. Several forty-niner diaries mention this Mormon family. On May 14, Peter Decker dined with the family and "bought of the old lady a large gingerbread." Mary McDougall Gordon, *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line: The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid*, ((Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 198. That same day, Dr. Charles Boyle "called at House of a Mormon family," where he took supper. "The Mormon family lost their stock last year on their way to 'the brethern' at Salt Lake City, and Stopped here, and expect to go next year....A daughter of the family, who attended at table, is well dressed, tidy and ladylike and withal pretty." George Harker, at the fort on May 31, mentioned "a boarding house kept by a Mormon." On June 9th Niles Searls noted "a family of Mormons who keep a boarding house with whom a number of our men made an excellent supper." Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 176-77, 183, 185-86. On June 8 and 9, forty-niner Bernard Reid had supper and breakfast "at the house of a Mormon family" named "Knowltons." Gordon, *Overland...with the Pioneer Line*, 49, 51. These Knowltons must have been relatives of Martha Jane Knowlton Coray who, with husband Howard Coray moved to Fort Kearny in August 1849 and wintered there, no doubt at this Knowlton boarding house. Howard Coray Autobiography and Diary, copy of holograph, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

<sup>54</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 173, 183; Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 135.

<sup>55</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 187.

<sup>56</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 166, 173. In his *Platte River Narratives*, Merrill Mattes noted that "at least 375 people recorded their frantic journey up the Platte," the great majority California-bound. The percentage of those who left a written record, he found, "is the highest of any overland migration year," 2.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Sedgley, *Overland to California in 1849* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 117; Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 187-90.

While camped by the fort, Thurber's company decided to get rid of their wagons and continue west as a mule pack train company. "I asked how much on a mule," Thurber said; "They said light. I told them [members of this company] that the pack was much too heavy they had loaded. Oh, No! [they said] and proceeded to put 250 [pounds] on a mule." When they resumed the trek, the company consisted of twenty-three men and thirty-three animals; ten of the men rode and thirteen walked. Thurber's mule company soon learned that packing and unpacking mules morning, midday and evening was hard work and time consuming. "I assisted to drive, pack and unpack some five days, saw that I could not stand it and on the sixth day, at night, I unpacked my mule and sat down. Some wanted to know if I was not going to help unpack. I said, 'no.'" Tired and annoyed, Thurber wanted the others to do their fair share of the labor as he had been doing.<sup>59</sup>

From Fort Kearny the little pack train plodded up the "Great Platte River Road" that followed the south side of the Platte River for 336 miles to Fort Laramie and the high plains of Wyoming. A few notable landmarks punctuated the route: Ash Hollow, Chimney Rock, and Scotts Bluff. Until the horde of travelers had reached the drier, high plains region, cholera stalked most emigrant companies and claimed many victims, including one in Thurber's company near Chimney Rock, a young man named "Shed." "He was buried with one of my blankets about him also a canvas hammock." Thurber recorded.<sup>60</sup>

Earlier on the trail in "cholera country" in mid-Nebraska, Thurber went to see a man he heard was a Mormon—a "Mormon curiosity"—Thurber termed him. John W. Hess was also heading west but only slowly, his outfit being a yoke of oxen shy of a full team. Hess had left Utah the previous year to return to Iowa to transport his mother and her four children west. He had signed on to act as a guide for a company of forty-niners, but his ox team could not keep up with the other horse-pulled wagons, the others leaving him behind. Now he was traveling alone at his oxen's pace. Thurber was impressed that Hess was confident and not agitated like most travelers having problems on the trail.<sup>61</sup>

Cholera, balking and lost animals, and broken wagons were not the only difficulties emigrants faced on the trail. One emigrant, camped near Chimney Rock, wrote about how bad the mosquitoes were. "Mosquitoes can't be beat. Day and night they swarm around completely covering the animals. At night they are worse, and if you do not suffocate yourself with

<sup>59</sup> Thurber Typescript, 21-22.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Forty-niner diaries that year suggest that cholera killed at least 1,500 on trails east of Fort Laramie. Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 115

<sup>61</sup> Thurber, Typescript, 23-4. For more on John Hess, see "John W. Hess with the Mormon Battalion," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 4 (April 1931): 47-55, especially 54-55. For more information about Mormon companies on the overland trail in 1849 see "Pioneer Companies That Crossed the Plains, 1847-1868," 1997-1998 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996), 168.

smoke inside the tent, they would eat you up."<sup>62</sup> Other problems that plagued Thurber's group were flies, wind, dust, and sunburn.

Moving ever higher and into the arid Great Plains, Thurber's little caravan found prairie grasses giving way to short, curly buffalo grass. One long stretch of the trail lacked timber, so men used buffalo chips as fuel for their campfires. By now well on the trail, Thurber came to dislike the cook the company had hired. "We were all in one mess, and although we had hired a negro & paid him in advance to cook for us we only had hard bread, Bacon & coffee" during the stretch from Westport to Fort Laramie. "I think he was the laziest and sauciest negro I ever saw." When the cook talked back to him, Thurber "took a neckyoke and told him I would relieve the co of a burden if he ever spoke to me again." Thurber tried to form a second mess, but the men claimed that "nobody but a niger could cook." The only soft bread Thurber ate from the time they left Missouri until they reached Fort Laramie was one biscuit he was handed at a stranger's camp while hunting for lost mules.<sup>63</sup>

William Swain, one of many travelers on the trail that summer, observed that at Fort Laramie "a great many parties are abandoning their wagons at this point and take to mule packing, on account of rumors of no grass and bad rocky roads" ahead.<sup>64</sup> Beside the road Thurber and his group also saw piles of bacon and hard bread, wagons, trunks, boots, shoes, clothes, spades, picks, rifles by the dozen, and old stoves without number that forty-niners had discarded when they switched from wagon trains to pack mule trains. Thurber noted that his own group, prior to Fort Laramie, "threw away much provisions, flour, beans, rice, penola, etc."<sup>65</sup>

Thurber's party reached Fort Laramie the third or fourth week in June. Located near the junction of the North Platte and Laramie rivers, the fort had been a principal trading post of the American Fur Company but, to protect emigrants, the federal government purchased it that June for four thousand dollars and moved army troops there. A company of mounted riflemen arrived on June 16, perhaps a week before Thurber did. Forty-niner William Kelly described the post as "a miserable, cracked, dilapidated, adobe, quadrangular enclosure, with a wall about twelve feet high, three sides of which were shedded down as stores and workshop, the fourth, or front, have a two-story erection, with a projecting balcony." Alonzo Delano, there on June 12, said the fort had "neat whitewashed walls" and around it was a "motley crowd of emigrants with their array of wagons, cattle, horses and mules" and other empty wagons, sold or abandoned.<sup>66</sup>

Few companies reached Laramie, historians have found, "without serious disputes that often caused division into two or more angry groups."<sup>67</sup> At

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 162-63.

<sup>63</sup> Thurber Typescript, 23.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Thurber Typescript, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 487-88, 490, 494.

<sup>67</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 146.

Laramie, Thurber said, "the dividing fever raged" in their company. Thurber, Sylvester Edgley and Edgley's friend named Creighton vowed that if the others refused to break up the company, the three of them would "take our arms and walk out and take all the animals we needed and the best in the company." As a result, the men split up into four messes and "the company was virtually broke up," dividing the animals by lot. Thurber, Edgley, and Creighton agreed to travel together. None of the four clusters invited Captain Webber to join them.

After waiting a day, the captain visited with Edgley and Creighton, old friends and comrades from Boston and asked if he might travel with them "but did not want me to go." Edgley and Creighton were hesitant about Webber joining them but told him that if he desired to accompany them he could do so, but that Thurber "was a going along." Major Dudley, who had been elected as the company's vice-president in Boston, also left the larger company electing to enter into government service as a secretary to a Major Cross, who was also bound for California. The black cook went with Major Cross's company, too, as a servant.<sup>68</sup>

Philosophizing about this fragmentation, Dr. Robinson, in the first break-off group from Thurber's company, wrote:

The Boston party that left Kansas City in two divisions, before reaching California found itself in numerous subdivisions. In all his learning the Yankee had never learned the lesson of subordination. So long as dynamite cartridges will explode under favoring circumstances, so long will explosions occur in Yankee parties on a joint-stock basis while traversing a wilderness in pursuit of gold. . . . In consequence of these explosions of the Yankee party, but a few hundred miles had been travelled when the Doctor [the writer] found himself one of a party of three persons, including himself, and all on horseback, with pack animals for supplies.<sup>69</sup>

Joining Thurber and the four others at Fort Laramie was a man named Pearson who bought "all necessary supplies" from the fort's commissary, and by "selling a carriage or two" the five men each fitted themselves with a riding mule and a pack animal. But, who would do the cooking? "Some thought it a serious matter to have no niger," Thurber noted,

. . . but I soon relieved all of fear so far a[s] the culinary was concerned by taking some Tartaric acid and soda with vinegar and mixed a batter for cakes and then fried our bacon and in the grease obtained therefrom. I fried nice light cakes and covered them with sugar of which we had plenty obtained at the Ft for 6 cts Pr lb. This with good coffee pickls, etc., was declared an improvement on the niger.<sup>70</sup>

By then, according to Thurber's version of things, the men had learned to trust his cooking skills and his judgment. "I recommended to keep the animals in sight of camp and remarked that they soon would not think of leaving." Then, when bedtime came, "we all lay down and went to sleep and never

<sup>68</sup> Thurber Typescript, 22-23.

<sup>69</sup> Barry, "Charles Robinson," 187.

<sup>70</sup> Thurber Typescript, 23. Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 42. Pearson was probably Charles Pearson, the original company's quartermaster.



guarded or herded from there to Salt lake." From then on, until they reached Great Salt Lake City, the company "travailed and lived comfortable."<sup>71</sup>

From Fort Laramie, Thurber and the others followed along the North Platte River to near present-day Casper, Wyoming, where they had to ferry or swim the mules across the river. By then Mormons were operating a substantial ferry located about three-and-a-half miles east of today's Casper, while a number of other more makeshift ferries worked within twenty-five miles downstream. From the North Platte crossing, Thurber's little group headed across a long, dry stretch to reach the life-giving Sweetwater River near imposing Independence Rock. Apparently, they were at Independence Rock on July 4th.<sup>72</sup> Swain, who reached that rock two weeks later, noted that "thousands of names are upon it, some painted well, others tarred, and many cut in the rock."<sup>73</sup>

From Independence Rock Thurber's contingent followed the Sweetwater westerly, leaving the river to ascend the gentle slopes to South Pass, "after an exhausting and heartbreaking march." The company then had thirty mules and four horses.<sup>74</sup> At South Pass the men had entered the boundaries of the Mormons' newly declared provisional state of Deseret and from there the trail headed southwesterly toward Fort Bridger. Before reaching the fort, forty-niners could choose to take the Sublette Cutoff that curved north around the Great Salt Lake or at Fort Bridger take the Oregon-California Trail north and around the lake, or follow the southwesterly Donner-Mormon route into Great Salt Lake City. Most chose the northerly loop and bypassed the Mormon settlements, but Thurber's company headed for the Mormon capital.<sup>75</sup> "Those who chose the Utah route," one historian notes, "were swayed by news from mountain men, military officers, and other travelers that the grass was gone from the Oregon Trail and that the Salt Lake road was shorter anyway."<sup>76</sup> Thurber and his party crossed the Green River, and then followed the Mormon Trail into the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Shortly after crossing the Green River, Thurber recorded another case of Captain Webber's obstinacy. One afternoon he and the captain were riding ahead of the other three men when they approached a place that would make a good camping site. Captain Webber "jumped off his mare and

<sup>71</sup> Thurber Typescript, 23.

<sup>72</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Holliday, *The World Rushed In*, 192.

<sup>74</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Brigham Madsen estimated that two-thirds of the forty-niners who crossed South Pass chose to bypass Great Salt Lake City, see Madsen's *Gold Rush Sojourners*, xii. Dale L. Morgan estimated between five and eight thousand passed through Salt Lake City in 1849, see his "Letters by Forty-niners Written from Great Salt Lake City in 1849," *Western Humanities Review* 3 (April 1949): 98. Brigham Madsen estimated about ten thousand forty-niners, see Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, 33. For a discussion about Fort Bridger see Fred R. Gowans and Eugene E. Campbell, *Fort Bridger: Island in the Wilderness* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

<sup>76</sup> Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, 23.

commenced to unsaddle," intending to make it a short travel day. Thurber told him that there were five in the company and when the other three came, "we would hold election" and the majority would decide. They decided that "we should go on and the Maj had to saddle up to pay for him for his precipitancy."<sup>77</sup>

The five-man team, riding and leading mules, arrived in Great Salt Lake City on July 19, 1849, about a month after the first forty-niners had reached the new Mormon city. Thurber's trip from Westport had taken him seventy days. His first reaction, if typical of the forty-niners, was one of "wonder and pleasure" to see "all these signs of cultivation in the wilderness."<sup>78</sup> Some six thousand to seven thousand people were living in the valley. Unlike other cities in the east, this city in the wilderness was a planned community with several hundred houses spaced out and not bunched together. Because timber was scarce, the favorite building material of the Mormon Saints for their houses was adobe--sturdy, but of dull gray in color. Forty-niners relished the Mormons' garden greens the irrigation canals made possible—fresh vegetables the overland travelers' diets had lacked for weeks. "We found here plenty of vegetables and fresh beef, other kinds of provisions we were unable to purchase owing to the scarcity," noted forty-niner William Z. Walker, from Boston.<sup>79</sup>

Coincidentally, the day after Thurber arrived in Salt Lake City, the LDS Church's First Presidency sent a letter to church authorities in Iowa describing the forty-niners' activities. In part they said:

On the 16th of June, the gold diggers began to arrive here on their way to the gold regions of California; since which time our peaceful valley has appeared like the half-way house of the pilgrims to Mecca, and still they come and go, and probably will continue to do so till fall. As many quit their wagons and pack at this point, and as many of their animals become worn down through fatigue, horses and mules are commanding high prices to complete the journey to the land of gold dust.<sup>80</sup>

The forty-niners were welcomed in the city of the Saints. Thurber experienced this as well while riding on a city street when he talked with an elderly man. "Well," the man said, "We are glad to see you even if you did drive us out of Missouri." For Thurber such a curious statement, "was all greek to me as I knew nothing of Mormons or their History."<sup>81</sup> He had met three Mormons previously during his trip across the plains, in "cholera country" where he had spoken with John W. Hess, and at the Green River

<sup>77</sup> Thurber Typescript, 23.

<sup>78</sup> *New York Tribune* correspondent writing from Great Salt Lake City, October 9, 1849, cited in Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, 34.

<sup>79</sup> William Z. Walker diary, July 23, 1849, cited in Brian D. Reeves, "Two Massachusetts Forty-Niner Perspectives on the Mormon Landscape, July–August 1849," *BYU Studies*, 38 (1999): 129. Walker arrived in Salt Lake City just four days after Albert Thurber's small company did.

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards to Elder Orson Hyde and the Authorities of the Church in Pottawatomie County, Iowa, July 20, 1849, in James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5 vols (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1965), 1:361.

<sup>81</sup> Thurber Typescript, 24.

Ferry where he met Ephraim Hanks and Andrew Lamoreaux. "It was reported that they would steal from us and we must watch close," Thurber remembered, "but they treated us like gentlemen. I saw hanks lasso a horse and considered it quite an Exploit."<sup>82</sup> Recalling others he met, I "talked with a number of men and was astonished to find them possessed of an unusual amt of gnl information, astonished for I had imagined them to be a class of ignorant dupes with a few smart men as leaders who made a good living out of the many after the spirit of the world."<sup>83</sup>

Thurber and his companions rode to the banks of the Jordan River and camped. Dissatisfied with the location, Thurber found a local Mormon bishop, Abraham O. Smoot, who gave them "the privilage of pitching our tent in the old fort," where they moved that night. There, he talked to a man he later learned was Willey Norton.<sup>84</sup> "What kind of god do you Mormons believe in?" Thurber asked. Norton replied, "In a god with a body parts and passions who can see, hear, walk & talk an exalted being." Thurber

. . . felt thunder struck and humiliated at this answer. It seemed that I ought to have known all this without asking. I could see immediately that the Scripture bore out this assertion. I talked with this man until 10o.c., Went into the Tent and told my comrades that whenever they got ready to leave they might do so, but that I was going to learn something more about these Mormons before I left.<sup>85</sup>

Most gold seekers stayed about a week and then pushed on. Often they traded trail-worn teams for new stock. Many gave up wagons in favor of pack mules bought from the Mormons.<sup>86</sup> Thurber's four compatriots did not linger long as well. From Salt Lake City Captain Webber wrote on July 31 that of the fifty-one in the original company, he was then with only himself, Creighton, Edgely, Pearson, and Thurber.<sup>87</sup>

As Thurber's Massachusetts associates made their preparations to leave, Thurber decided to quit the venture and stay in Salt Lake City. Thurber's decision sparked a debate among them of how much, if anything, Thurber should be given of the common company property:

Captain Weber was continually saying that we could not divide or draw out my share of property to 1 1/2 mules. I told him we could arrange it & when they got ready to start, I said to Egely and creighton that they had been my friends that they needed all the animals they had to insure their safety to Cal and that I would give them my interest in the stock,

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Andrew Lamoreaux and eight others went to the Green River in early June to ferry California bound emigrants over the river, see *Journal History of the Church*, June 12, 1849, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Thurber Typescript, 25.

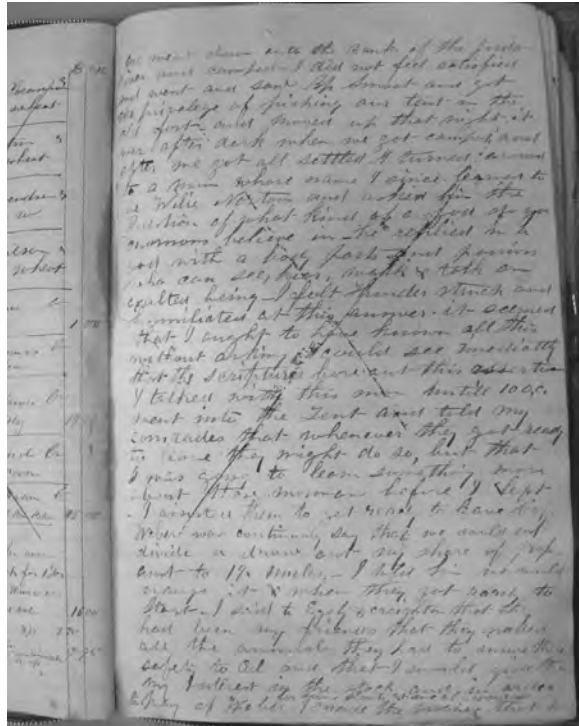
<sup>84</sup> Abraham O. Smoot became bishop of the church's 15th ward in Salt Lake City in February of 1849 and was also Utah's first justice of the peace. See G. Elliott Berlin, "Abraham Owen Smoot, Pioneer Mormon Leader," (masters thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), 49-50. James Willey Norton—called Willey in one entry of the *Journal History of the Church* index—was born in Ohio in 1822 and came to Utah the previous fall in Heber C. Kimball's big company. See, Frank Esshom, "James Willey Norton," *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers Publishing Co., 1913), 1073.

<sup>85</sup> Thurber Typescript, 24.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, 34.

and in order to pay off[f] Weber for some stunts about me about means, I made the proviso that he was not to have the use of them. We parted after they, my friends, giving me a number of articles that they did not wish to take with them, among which was an overcoat from Egely, [which] cost \$35.00 in Boston, which afterwards was of great benefit to me. They also gave me an order to take what articles that they had put into ox teams which a member of the company had bought & hired a stranger to drive to Cal. The team went the Ft Hall rout and the man proved an honest man, as I had sent all articles that I thought I should not need via Cape Horn I found my self with a fine black coat one pair of pants 2 flannel shirts, & a pair of 50 ct turned pumps which about constituted my wardrobe and no money.<sup>88</sup>



COURTESY OF AUTHOR

**Copy of a page from the Albert King Thurber Journal.**

Captain Webber's little group left Great Salt Lake City with thirteen pack mules. They "suffered incredible hardships on the march, losing all their mules but four," By the time they arrived in Sacramento in September, they had spent six months journeying from Boston.<sup>89</sup>

Thurber's discussions in the city about religion led to his converting to Mormonism. He accepted baptism in September 1849. Soon thereafter, to his great surprise, church leaders asked him and others to go to California on a gold mining mission to benefit the church and individuals who backed the venture. So he did go to the gold fields after all. He kept a detailed diary of their route along what became the Salt Lake-Los Angeles trail and about his prospecting days. He worked in the gold fields through the summer of 1850, was unsuccessful, and then returned to Utah in September 1850.<sup>90</sup>

Most forty-niners expected to find a fortune and return to their families. Thurber started from Massachusetts with that same intent. But, after his gold mining mission for the LDS church, he decided to remain in Utah and not return east to his family. Shortly after his gold mission to

<sup>88</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 192.

<sup>89</sup> Thurber Typescript, 25-26.

<sup>90</sup> Howe, *Argonauts of '49*, 43.



California and his return to Utah, Thurber married Thirza Berry in 1851, and they became early settlers in what became Spanish Fork. With many Indians in the area, Thurber studied their language and became, as he said, "somewhat proficient." He was an officer in the local militia and served as a bishop in Spanish Fork as well as the town's mayor. He was elected to three terms as a Utah County selectman and numerous terms in Utah's legislative assembly. In the 1860s he filled an LDS church mission in England (he visited Rhode Island relatives on the way there). Upon his return, in 1866, he became a brigadier-general in the territorial militia. He entered polygamy, marrying Agnes Brockbank as a second wife. In 1874, President Brigham Young called him to settle in Sevier County to work with Native Americans. Moving to Grass Valley and then to Richfield, he was elected to three more terms in the territorial legislature. A counselor in the LDS Sevier Stake from 1877 to 1887, he became the stake president and served in that leadership position until his death in Ephraim, Utah, on March 21, 1888.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> William G. Harley, "Albert King Thurber; Gold-Mining Missionary in California," *Mormon Heritage Magazine* 1 (December 1994): 8-11; Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riches* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2004), 268-74; Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 72-76. Andrew Jenson, ed., "Albert King Thurber," in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4 (reprint, Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 1: 519-21.



UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Mountain Meadows Massacre: An Analytical Narrative Based on Participant Confessions

By ROBERT H. BRIGGS

**O**n September 11, 1857, an overland emigrant train was massacred at the Mountain Meadows in Utah Territory. Of the unfortunate members of the Arkansas wagon company, an estimated one hundred twenty of their number were massacred at that high and now infamous oasis.

While much has been written about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, any foundation for understanding the tragedy must be built on what primary eyewitnesses said and wrote about the events surrounding it. The purpose of this article is to sift through the extant sources, with particular attention to the admissions of fourteen self-confessed Iron County militia eyewitnesses who left testimony or statements regarding the massacre.<sup>1</sup>

*The Mountain Meadows Massacre*

This paper applies accepted methods to *Site*

Robert H. Briggs is a practicing attorney in Southern California. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 2001 Annual Conference of the Mormon History Association in Cedar City and the 2002 Juanita Brooks Lecture in St. George.

<sup>1</sup> Some seventy-five witnesses to events surrounding the massacre have left more than one hundred written statements in a variety of genres, from letters, diaries and journals to trial testimony, depositions and affidavits.

the confessions, accounts, statements, affidavits and testimony of Iron County militia participants.<sup>2</sup> Part one of this paper discusses fourteen self-confessed participants who provided authentic statements concerning the massacre. The second part narrates the massacre based largely on the confessions of these participants. The final section draws conclusions and considers limitations in the study. The main argument is that corroborated confessions are the most reliable elements of the participants' statements.

The methods I have employed can be stated briefly. I have given priority to the narratives of the massacre participants. In these narratives, they frequently confessed or admitted to participation in events surrounding the massacre. These *confessions* are reliable on the commonsense ground that people do not confess involvement in crime unless it is true.<sup>3</sup> Applying this to the militia participants in the massacre, we may conclude that if a militiaman confessed to participation in the massacre, these statements are most likely true, especially when independently verified.<sup>4</sup> The participants' narratives also contain *incidental details*; facts or events about which they had no reason to lie. When verified from other sources, these too are treated as reliable.<sup>5</sup> But accomplice testimony involving blame shifting or accusations against others are the least reliable of all and treated with skepticism.<sup>6</sup>

The methodology will be applied to the confessions and admissions of massacre participants and other southern Utah militiamen. If there is a bedrock truth that we can "know" about the massacre, it will be found in *confessions independently verified*.

The investigation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre was conducted in three great waves. The first wave began in 1859 with investigators from

<sup>2</sup> The historical method considers *authentic* and *credible* evidence. To establish *authenticity*, historical method seeks the accounts of primary witnesses. To establish *credible historical evidence*, historical method considers, first, whether the primary witness was *able* and *willing* to tell the truth and was *accurately reported* and, second, whether there is *independent corroboration* for the detail under examination. The first test establishes the initial *credibility* of the source while the second demonstrates its *coherence* with other sources. Stated differently, we consider witness competence, character, motive, bias, the internal coherence of his or her narrative and its consistency with other evidence. Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950, revd. 1969), 150; see also Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 70–71.

<sup>3</sup> "[W]hen a statement is *prejudicial to a witness*, his dear ones, or his causes, it is likely to be truthful." Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 161 (emphasis in the original). Or, "an admission against self-interest, other things being equal, is most convincing." Wood Gray, ed., *Historian's Handbook: A Key to the Study and Writing of History* (1956, rev. 1964, reissued Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2001), 58. On the reliability of confessions, see, *American Jurisprudence*, 2nd ed. (Rochester, NY: Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, 1994), vol. 29A, "Evidence," 118–23.

<sup>4</sup> Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 166–67.

<sup>5</sup> "Where the purport of the statement is a *matter of indifference to the witness*, he is likely to be unbiased." Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 161 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>6</sup> "The danger is," as the English judge Lord Abinger expressed it, "that when a man is fixed, and knows that his own guilt is detected, he purchases immunity by falsely accusing others." The danger of accomplice accusations against co-conspirators is that by shifting blame to them, he or she hopes to receive leniency or other advantages. John Henry Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, 10 vols. (1904, rev. ed. James H. Chadbourn, Aspen Law & Business, 1970), 7:417, quoting Lord Abinger, C. B., in *R. v. Farler*, 8 Car. & P. 106, 107–108 (1837).

several separate departments in the Buchanan administration: Indian agent Jacob Forney and Utah territorial judge John Cradlebaugh from the Interior Department, and Brevet Major James H. Carleton from the War Department. However, few Iron County militiamen made meaningful statements then. The outbreak of the Civil War ended these investigations and little was done for a decade.

The second wave of investigation occurred during the 1870s and began with federal officials procuring the affidavit of Phillip Klingensmith.<sup>7</sup> It led to the indictment of nine Iron County militiamen for their role in the massacre and the two trials of John D. Lee. During the Lee trial in 1875, militiamen such as Philip Klingensmith, the erstwhile Mormon bishop and by then an “infamous apostate,” created a sensation. Yet Mormon militia captain Joel White confirmed key parts of Klingensmith’s testimony.<sup>8</sup> Samuel Pollock described the massacre and named eight other militiamen at the Meadows besides himself and Lee.<sup>9</sup> The aging William Young identified seven others.<sup>10</sup> James Pearce, only



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**Phillip Klingensmith**

<sup>7</sup> In 1857, the Tenth Regiment or Iron Military District was composed of four battalions, nine companies and approximately forty-five platoons. Klingensmith was a private in one of the platoons in Company D of the Second Battalion, Cedar City. Philip Klingensmith (1815-1881 or later) was born in western Pennsylvania of German and Scots-Irish heritage. He moved west to Ohio, then Indiana, where he joined the Mormon church. Following the arc of most Mormons, he moved to western Illinois, then to Utah Territory. In the 1850s Klingensmith settled in Cedar City, worked as a blacksmith and served as bishop. In the early 1860s Klingensmith was disillusioned and moved to Nevada. He rarely returned to Utah. In 1871, he prepared an affidavit about the massacre. He was among nine militiamen named in the 1874 murder indictment. In 1875, following a plea bargain he turned state’s evidence and testified in the Lee trial. Later, he reportedly moved to Arizona, then to Sonora, Mexico. The sources disagree as to his death, some holding that he died violently in 1881; others, that he died of natural causes some time later.

<sup>8</sup> In 1857, White was a captain in Company D, Second Battalion, Cedar City. Joel William White (1831-1914) was descended from New England Puritans. He was born in northwestern Pennsylvania. By the 1840s the Whites had joined the Mormons in western Illinois and later joined the westering Mormon exodus from Illinois. By the mid-1850s, White had settled near Cedar City. In 1859 White and his family moved to Utah County. During the Lee trials of 1875-76, White was the only witness to testify in both trials. In the 1890s he made a brief affidavit in defense of John M. Higbee. He and his wife later settled in Box Elder County where he remained until his death in 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Pollock was a sergeant in Company E, Second Battalion, Cedar City. Samuel Pollack (1824-1891) was an Ulster Scot/Irish from North Ireland. He converted to the Mormon church, immigrated to Nauvoo, Illinois, and joined the 1846 Mormon exodus from western Illinois. By 1855, Pollock and his first wife, Elizabeth, were in Cedar City in southern Utah. In 1875, he testified in the Lee trial. Previous to that Pollock and his family had moved to Kanarraville in Washington County where he spent the remainder of his life.

<sup>10</sup> Young was a private in Company I, Fourth Battalion, Washington. William Alma Young (1805-1875) was born in the Tennessee backcountry. During the 1840s he joined the Mormons in western Illinois, then immigrated to Utah. In the early 1850s, Young and his family settled in Fort Harmony where John D. Lee was a dominant figure. Young alternately clashed and cooperated with Lee. In 1857, the Young family

**John D. Lee**

eighteen years old at the time of the massacre, described mustering to the Mountain Meadows and observing the massacre.<sup>11</sup>

During the second trial in 1876, Samuel McMurdie, Nephi Johnson and Samuel Knight testified as prosecution witnesses.<sup>12</sup> Around the same time Joseph Clews prepared an important statement, which was published in California and in 1877, in Utah.<sup>13</sup> Some years later, Nephi Johnson and Samuel Knight would give several additional statements about the massacre, revealing new details about it.<sup>14</sup>

The notoriety of John D. Lee and his trial, conviction and execution made him the most well known of the 1857 Iron County militiamen. Lee made several disclosures about the massacre: brief statements to federal officials in 1859; an interview to journalist John Henry Beadle in 1873; a plea bargain statement in 1875; his so-called "Confessions" in 1876-77; and the so-called Lee-Howard statement in 1877. After his execution in March 1877, his life

joined other southerners in Washington, Washington County. In 1875, Young testified in the first Lee trial. Some noted that he looked "crushed," with a "death rattle" in his throat. In fact he was nearly seventy and not a well man. He died one month later.

<sup>11</sup> Pearce was a private in Company I, Fourth Battalion, Washington, Washington County. James Pearce (1839-1922) was a Mississippian of Scots-Irish heritage. Members of the Pearce clan joined the Mormons in the 1840s and immigrated to Utah in the early 1850s. In 1857, the Pearce clan joined a migration of southerners to Washington County to found the Cotton Mission in Utah's Dixie. Later Pearce joined Mormon explorations to Navajo and Hopi lands in Arizona. In the Black Hawk War of the 1860s, Pearce was involved in policing and punitive actions against suspected Indian raiders. His testimony in the 1875 Lee trial contains his only extant statements about the massacre. Pearce moved to Arizona where he remained until his death in 1922.

<sup>12</sup> McMurdie was a sergeant in Company E, Second Battalion, Cedar City. The only Englishman from the "center" of the British Empire, Samuel McMurdie (1830-1922) was born outside of London. Baptized into the Mormon church in 1851, McMurdie immigrated to Utah in 1853. By 1857, he had settled in Cedar City when he married an English emigrant in one of many Reformation-era marriages. In 1859, the McMurdies moved to Cache Valley in northern Utah. Investing in imported purebred livestock, he operated a successful dairy and creamery. His 1876 trial testimony contains his only statements relative to the massacre. He died in 1922 at the age of ninety-three.

<sup>13</sup> Clews was a private in Company F, Third Battalion, Cedar City. Joseph Thomas Clews/Clews (1831-1894) was from the West Midlands of central England. In the late 1840s his family joined the Mormon church and immigrated to the United States. Clews and his sister made their way to Utah and settled in Cedar City. Around 1859, disillusioned with Mormonism, Clews and his wife relocated to San Bernardino, California. There Clews resided, raising his family and pursuing farming and stone masonry until his death in 1894.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson was a Second Lieutenant in Company D, Second Battalion, Fort Johnson in Iron County. Nephi Johnson (1833-1919) was born at Kirtland, Ohio and his parents were early believers in Joseph Smith's restoration movement. By the early 1840s, the Johnson family had settled in western Illinois, by the late 1840s they had immigrated to Utah, and by the early 1850s they had located in a small settlement near Cedar City. In later years, Johnson became a proficient Indian interpreter, founded new colonies in



story was published as *Mormonism Unveiled, or the Life and Confessions of John D. Lee*. The Lee-Howard statement also received wide circulation.<sup>15</sup>

The third wave of investigation was in the 1890s and thereafter. For various reasons some previously reticent witnesses now spoke for the first time or expanded on prior statements. During the 1870s, militia private Elliot Willden had been arrested for complicity in the massacre. However, the charges were eventually dropped and in the 1890s Willden provided an interview that contained unique acknowledgments about the massacre.<sup>16</sup> John M. Higbee provided two statements, both largely exculpatory of his personal role but with important particulars.<sup>17</sup> Daniel S. Macfarlane's affidavit was largely a defense of John M. Higbee.<sup>18</sup>

Much later, at Nephi Johnson's deathbed in 1919, some six decades after the disaster at Mountain Meadows, a young schoolteacher witnessed his tortured nightmares of the massacre. The experience prompted Juanita

southern Utah, joined early explorations of Arizona and the Colorado River, eventually moved to Juarez, Mexico, and finally relocated to Bunkerville, Nevada, where he died in 1919. Knight was a private in Company H, Fourth Battalion, Fort Clara in Washington County. Descended from New England forebears, Samuel Knight (1832-1910) was born in the Mormon colony in western Missouri. The family was dispossessed three times of its holdings in western Missouri and once in western Illinois. Immigrating to Utah in 1847, by the mid-1850s he had moved to southern Utah as an Indian interpreter and helped found Fort Clara (modern Santa Clara). Knight joined several Mormon expeditions to the Hopi and Navajo of Arizona. However, except for such excursions, he resided in Santa Clara for the remainder of his life. Knight is one of my great-great grandfathers.

<sup>15</sup> Lee was major over the Fourth Battalion, Harmony in Washington County. John Doyle Lee (1812-1877) was born in southwestern Illinois. His father was from southwestern Virginia. His mother was a Scots-Irish Doyle from Tennessee. In 1832, Lee served in the militia in the Illinois Black Hawk War. In 1837, he and his wife converted to Mormonism and resettled in western Missouri. In the 1838 unrest there, Lee joined in the conflict. He resettled in western Illinois, then immigrated to Utah in 1848 and by 1851, he was colonizing in southern Utah. He served as presiding elder, probate judge, legislator and Indian farmer. He was also known for entrepreneurial skill and hospitality. He eventually married eighteen wives. In the 1870s, Lee was excommunicated from the Mormon church. In 1874 he was arrested in connection with the massacre. His 1875 trial ended in a hung jury. He was convicted in the 1876 retrial. In March 1877, his legal appeals exhausted, he was executed by firing squad at Mountain Meadows.

<sup>16</sup> Willden was a private in Company F, Third Battalion, Cedar City. Elliot Willden/Wilden (1833-1920) was a North Briton descended from British borderers. In the 1840s, the family joined the Mormons and immigrated to the United States. Arriving in Utah in 1851, by 1853 they had joined English, Scots, Welsh and others in the Iron Mission in southern Utah. In 1861 the Willden family established Fort Willden on Cove Creek in Millard County. In the early 1860s, the Willdens introduced sheep herding to southern Utah. Returning to Beaver because of unrest during Utah's Black Hawk War, Willden established his home there where he lived for more than fifty years.

<sup>17</sup> Higbee was in a major in Third Battalion, Cedar City. John Mount Higbee (1827-1904) was born in Ohio. Joining the Mormons, his family settled in western Missouri. Eventually they would be dispossessed from three homesteads in western Missouri and one in western Illinois. They immigrated to Utah in 1847 and by the mid-1850s Higbee had married and settled in Cedar City. He was a counselor to Isaac C. Haight in the Cedar stake presidency. During the Black Hawk War of the late 1860s, Higbee led various militia operations. In 1874 Higbee was indicted in connection with the massacre and he went into hiding. When the prosecutions stalled, Higbee returned to Cedar City. During the 1890s, he made two lengthy statements concerning the massacre. He died in 1904 in Cedar City.

<sup>18</sup> Macfarlane was adjutant to Captain Joel White in Company D, Second Battalion, Cedar City. Daniel Sinclair Macfarlane (1837-1914) was born in the Scottish Highlands. Members of the Macfarlane family joined the Mormon church and in the 1850s they immigrated to Utah and joined their mentor Isaac Haight in Cedar City. With his deep voice Macfarlane was successful in local choirs and dramas. In the 1870s, he served as a missionary to his native Scotland. He prepared a short affidavit of the massacre in the 1890s. He died in 1914 after more than sixty years in Cedar City.

Brooks to later write *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Finally, in 1924, more than sixty-five years after the massacre, William Edwards made a short affidavit of his presence at the massacre as a youth of fifteen.<sup>19</sup> This ended the third wave.

Now we turn to the confessional elements of the militiamen's statements. The primary crimes at the Mountain Meadows Massacre were murder and conspiracy. The "elements" of these crimes include the initial planning, first attack, final decoy and massacre, and later acts of deception and cover-up. The elements also include the intentionality and anticipations of the conspirators. Any evidence bearing on the thoughts or actions of accomplices during the conspiracy is relevant to our inquiry. Sifting the massacre narratives for confessions or admissions, we find that one or more of the militiamen have confessed to the key elements of murder and conspiracy before, during and after the massacre.

Following is a narrative of the massacre. It contains more than seventy key confessions. Drawn from fourteen massacre participants and other militiamen, these admissions cover all aspects of the massacre. To provide context, I have also included other narration, which has substantial support in the evidence.<sup>20</sup> The confessional statements are numbered in parentheses.

*War Atmosphere and Invasion Panic in Southern Utah, August 16 - September 11, 1857*

(1) Many Iron County militiamen admitted that in the late summer of 1857, the approaching army of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston created a profound sense of crisis in southern Utah. Major John M. Higbee of the Iron Military District's Third Battalion recalled the intense state of alarm or "excitement" among the populace. "[T]he further from [Salt Lake City] the greater the excitement," Higbee conceded, while the excitement in Cedar City was at "fever heat."<sup>21</sup> (2) The militia leaders of the Iron Military District feared a "southern invasion" of United States dragoons detached from Col. Johnston's army or from Texas or New Mexico approaching over the Old Spanish or Fremont trails. In a contemporary account of conditions in southern Utah, Mormon leader George A. Smith observed that, "some rumor or spirit of surprise had reached them." They were "under

<sup>19</sup> Edwards was not listed in 1857 militia rolls. William Edwards (1841-1925) was born in the West Midlands of England. He immigrated to Utah with his parents in 1851. In 1857 the family moved to Iron County. In the 1860s, Edwards moved to Beaver County and married a Scottish emigrant. Besides farming Edwards also served as constable and postmaster in Beaver. He served as a Mormon bishop in Greenville in Beaver County. In 1924, a year before his death, Edwards prepared a brief affidavit concerning the massacre.

<sup>20</sup> The narrative is framed within a chronology that reflects my interpretation of all evidence currently available to me. In many cases the chronological data are well supported in the sources. In others, the sources are flatly contradictory. Thus, my chronology contains many data points about which most investigators agree. On others, however, some have interpreted the contradictory data differently.

<sup>21</sup> John M. Higbee, Statement, February 1894, MS 2674, fd 14, Archives of the Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives). Higbee's 1894 statement is appended in Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, 1970), Appendix 2, 226-35, 227.

the impression that their country was about to be invaded by an army from the US” and they were prepared to “touch fire to their homes, hide themselves in the mountains, and defend their country to the last extremity.”<sup>22</sup>

(3) In a sermon George A. Smith preached in Cedar City, he raised the subject of invasion, telling his audience “it might be necessary to set fire to our property, and hide in the mountains.” By the time he preached in nearby Fort Harmony, he acknowledged that his own discourse “partook of the military more than the religious.”<sup>23</sup> (4) Major John M. Higbee admitted that the Iron County militia undertook extensive militia preparations as they considered the best means of “defending ourselves and families against the approaching army.” They looked for places of refuge “in



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**George A. Smith**

case we had to burn our towns and flee to the mountains.” Finally, they sent out scouting parties in order to “prevent any portion of the army from approaching.” Further, speaking of “their endeavors to protect themselves and families from Mob Violence,” Major Higbee admitted that people spoke of “Buchanan’s Army” as “a mob.” Higbee also conceded that local settlers “had to be good friends with the Indians at all hazards” so that “they could be used as allies should the Necessity come to do so.”<sup>24</sup>

Major Isaac C. Haight of the military district’s Second Battalion revealed his bellicose intention when he declared that he would not wait for orders from headquarters in Salt Lake City but his battalion would attack the dragoons “and use them up before they got down through the canyon.”<sup>25</sup> (5) The threatening atmosphere created by the invasion excitement fanned the fears of an overzealous element within the Iron Military District. Ignoring later legends perpetrated by the purveyors of a sensationalist crime genre that fed on the massacre, there is still ample evidence that even other Mormons perceived this element as a threat to their own safety. In a reminiscent account, Major John M. Higbee avowed that during the “Buchanan or Mormon War” there was among some “a craze of fanaticism stronger than we would be willing now to

<sup>22</sup> George A. Smith, Address, September 13, 1857, *Deseret News*, September 23, 1857.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> John M. Higbee, Statements, February 1894 and June 15, 1896, MS 2674, fd. 14 and 15, LDS Church Archives (hereafter Higbee 1894 Statement and Higbee 1896 Statement, respectively); see also Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 226–27 for the 1894 statement. The militiamen scouts known to have searched the Old Spanish or Fremont trails for invaders were John Chatterley, Joseph Fish, John Groves, Christopher Jacobs, Seth Johnson, Samuel Lewis, James H. Martineau, Elias Morris, and Wesley Willis.

<sup>25</sup> *Deseret News*, September 23, 1857.

admit.”<sup>26</sup> (6) Believing as he did that the Mormons were “at war with the United States,” Major John D. Lee of the Fourth Battalion opined that it was “the will of every true Mormon in Utah . . . that enemies of the Church should be killed as fast as possible.”<sup>27</sup>

*Conduct of the Emigrant Train*

As we shall see, some settlers in Cedar City accused the Arkansas emigrants of provocative acts. Therefore, it is relevant that other Mormon militiamen from the same military district had encounters with the emigrants, that involved no such behavior. Their numerous encounters were at least civil if not cordial.

During the evening of August 24, the George A. Smith party met the emigrant train at Corn Creek. Besides Smith, his party included Jacob Hamblin and Thales Haskell of Fort Clara (Santa Clara), Silas Smith of Parowan, and Philo T. Farnsworth and Elisha Hoops of Beaver. Hamblin would later opine that some emigrant men were “rude and rough and calculated to get the ill will of the inhabitants.” Yet Hamblin described his own conversations as ordinary trail talk about grass, water and other trail conditions without any unpleasantness. Personally, he found them to be “ordinary frontier ‘homespun’ people, as a general thing.”<sup>28</sup>

Testifying in the 1875 Lee trial, Silas Smith noted that when some of the emigrant men asked if the Indians would eat a dead ox that lay nearby, it “created suspicion that they would play foul games by some means.” Some of them also said “By God!” and similar expressions. They were a “rough lot of people,” thought Silas, although he acknowledged, “I could not say that they were a rough set of fellows, but that was my opinion.” But as we will see, his reservations were minor. He had two later encounters, each one amicable.<sup>29</sup>

The experiences of many others were similar. John Hawley maintained

<sup>26</sup> Higbee 1896 Statement, LDS Church Archives. Although Higbee couched his statement as an accusation rather than a confession, John Chatterley provided some corroboration. Referring to “an insane . . . religious fanaticism,” he opined that “a secret Committee, called ‘Danites,’ or ‘destroying angels’” had threatened him although the period he referred to was late 1856 and early 1857. John Chatterley to Andrew Jenson, Letter, September 18, 1919, Andrew Jenson file, LDS Church Archives; see also Donald R. Moorman Papers, Special Collections, Stewart Library, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah (hereafter Moorman Papers).

<sup>27</sup> John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled, or The Life and Confessions of John D. Lee* (St Louis: Bryant, Brand & Company, 1877), 221, hereafter cited as *Confessions*. As to others this is hearsay but it is an implied admission of Lee’s own state of mind.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Hamblin to James H. Carleton, Interview, ca. May 20, 1859, in “Special Report on the Mountain Meadow Massacre by Brevet Major J. H. Carleton, United States Army, Captain, First Dragoons,” May 25, 1859, 57th Cong., 1st sess., House Exec. Doc. 605 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), Serial Set 4377; reprinted as “The Mountain Meadows Massacre: A Special Report by J. H. Carleton, Bvt. Major U. S. A., Captain 1st Dragoons, 1859” (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1995), 12.

<sup>29</sup> Testimony of Silas Smith in *People vs. Lee, et al.* The trial transcripts and legal pleadings in the two trials of John D. Lee, 1875–76, are in HM 16904, Jacob Boreman Collection, Mormon Americana Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. All references hereafter to the “testimony” of any witness are from the Lee trial transcripts in the Boreman Collection.

that he traveled with the Arkansas train for part of three days. Silas Smith saw them again just north of Beaver and “took supper” with them. In Beaver, Edward W. Thompson and Robert Kershaw watched them pass without untoward incident. A hearsay account maintains that John Morgan of Beaver traded a cheese to an emigrant. Traveling south to Red Creek (Paragonah) Silas Smith visited them for the third and last time. A half a dozen miles ahead at Parowan, Jesse Smith traded salt and flour to them. A hearsay account says that Alfred Hadden of Parowan traded them a cow that Hadden was running at Shirt’s Creek south of Cedar City.<sup>30</sup>



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**John M. Higbee**

Elsewhere, the accounts are similar. Near Fort Hamilton, a few miles south of Cedar City, John Hamilton Jr. delivered a cow to them to complete the trade with Alfred Hadden. As the company approached the hamlet of Pinto in the evening of Friday, September 4, Joel W. White and Philip Klingensmith passed them on horseback going and returning without incident. Entering the Mountain Meadows on Saturday evening, September 5, militia private David Tullis observed that they were a “large and respectable-looking company” who “behaved civilly.” Samuel Knight and Carl Shirts met them farther down valley. In a statement attributed to Carl Shirts, they were “perfectly civil and gentlemanly.”<sup>31</sup>

Thus, contrary to much later rumor and hearsay, credible accounts demonstrate that during the journey from central Utah into the south, local settlers had a remarkable number of encounters with the emigrant train which they would have characterized as civil.

*Hostility in Cedar City toward the Emigrant Company—ca. Thursday, September 3*

But in Cedar City invasion fears were peaking. The result was that the

<sup>30</sup> John Hawley, “Autobiography of John Hawley,” 1889, typescript of handwritten manuscript, 15, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; Testimony of Silas Smith, Edward W. Thompson, Robert Kershaw, Jesse N. Smith and John Hamilton Jr.

<sup>31</sup> Testimony of John Hamilton Jr., Joel White and Philip Klingensmith; Philip Klingensmith, Affidavit, April 10, 1871, quoted in T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), 439–42, 440 (hereafter Klingensmith Affidavit); also in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Appendix 4, 238–42; David Tullis to Jacob Forney, Interview, April 1859, in Jacob Forney, Annual Report, August 1859, *Message of the President of the United States*, 36 Cong., 1st sess., Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 42 (Washington: George W. Bowman, 1860), Serial Set 1033, 7480, 76; also in Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Appendix 9, 253–60; Testimony of Samuel Knight; “Statement of Mr. William H. Rogers,” *The Valley Tan*, February 29, 1860, in Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Appendix 11, 265–79. The problem with the attributes of the informant whom Marshal Rogers identifies as Carl Shirts is that they are a better fit of Samuel Knight.





**Isaac C. Haight**

fog of war warped the settlers' perceptions of the passing emigrants. There are a variety of accounts, some first-hand and many second-, third- and fourth-hand, with many contradictions and some obvious exaggerations. What the first-hand accounts have in common is this: Disputes arose in Cedar City among emigrants and settlers over trading and sales; one or more emigrants used profane and threatening speech, possibly toward an elderly Mormon woman; to provoke the Mormons, one or more emigrants may have boasted of killing the Mormon founder Joseph Smith some years before; and, when the local marshal intervened, one or more emigrants threatened the marshal and showed contempt for his authority.<sup>32</sup> Although the number of "combatants" in this fracas was small, the tenor of the surviving accounts is that this encounter was explosive

and Cedar settlers found their behavior shocking.<sup>33</sup> It left some of the Cedar City militia leaders sputtering.

Senior militia and religious authorities in Cedar City (who in most cases were one and the same) quickly leapt to a conclusion. With the war climate skewing their interpretation of events, they concluded that the emigrants were hostile and in league with U.S. troops then invading southern Utah. (7) One statement comes from Major Haight's adjutant, the young Welshman Elias Morris. Morris avowed that the emigrants were allied with the advancing troops "as they [the emigrants] themselves claimed."<sup>34</sup> (8) Cedar City militiaman Charles Willden swore in an affidavit that "the United States troops were on the plains en route to Utah, that they and said [Arkansas] Company would go on to the Mountain Meadows, and wait there until the arrival of said troops into the Territory and would then return to Cedar and Salt Lake [and] other towns through which they had passed in said Territory and carry out their threats. . . ."<sup>35</sup> In the same

<sup>32</sup> In analyzing mass killings, Ervin Staub determined that "unhealed group trauma" had "especial instigative power." Ervin Staub, "Mass Murder," in Ronald Gottesman, ed., *Violence in America, An Encyclopedia*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999), 2:320-29; see also Staub, "Psychology of Mass Killings and Genocide," in Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols. (Oxford, Eng.: Elsevier Science Ltd., 2001), 14:9338-41. The murder of the Mormon prophet was an unhealed group trauma of a high order.

<sup>33</sup> Elias Morris to Andrew Jenson, Interview, February 2, 1892, MS 2674, fd. 10, LDS Church Archives; Charles Willden, Affidavit, February 18, 1882, MS 2674, Fd 9, LDS Church Archives; Higbee 1896 Statement, LDS Church Archives; see also Moorman Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Elias Morris to Andrew Jenson

<sup>35</sup> Charles Willden Affidavit, LDS Church Archives.

fashion, militia commanders conflated the threatening U. S. troops they imagined were in the eastern mountains with the emigrants in their midst. (9) Moreover, the orders they sent to other settlements conveyed their skewed views. Thus, several days later and in response to orders, Mormon Southerners from Washington moved toward Mountain Meadows. Riding along, James Pearce later recounted, they discussed reports from Cedar City. "The talk was [about] the party, that some of them said they had helped to kill old Joe Smith and they were going to California to raise some troops. They was going down below for a thousand men, going to get men already armed, and would come back and drive the Mormons out and take their means from them."<sup>36</sup>

(10) After the confrontation in Cedar City, Bishop Philip Klingensmith, also a private in one of the militia platoons, confessed that he was present at a council meeting at which the "destruction" of this emigrant company was debated.<sup>37</sup> (11) As a militia leader in the south, Major John D. Lee confessed that "the killing of [the Arkansas company] would be keeping our oaths and avenging the blood of the Prophets."<sup>38</sup> (12) Major Lee averred that the emigrants were so depraved that there was not "a drop of innocent Blood in their whole Camp."<sup>39</sup> Talk of "no innocent blood" is significant for two reasons. First, it is strong evidence of "devaluing," which some argue is a necessary condition in mass killings. Second, it is an extreme form of denunciation indicating that the actors may be shifting from fighting words to hostile actions.<sup>40</sup>

*Planning Hostile Action Against the Emigrant Company – September 4-6, 1857*

(13) While some militiamen later acted out of a sense of military or religious compulsion, others' actions were not mere servile obedience to orders but active cooperation and collaborative effort. Thus, in describing the night meeting with Major Isaac C. Haight at the iron works in Cedar City in which they laid plans to incite Indian attacks on the emigrant train, Major Lee confessed, "We agreed upon the whole thing, how each one should act. . . ."<sup>41</sup> (14) Moreover, Lee admitted to the conspiratorial setting of his meeting with Major Haight in Cedar City: late at night at the iron works, wrapped in blankets against the cold, away from prying eyes and ears.<sup>42</sup> (15) Lee admitted receiving orders to convey to his son-in-law, Don Carlos (or Carl) Shirts, "to raise the Indians south, at Harmony, Washington

<sup>36</sup> Testimony of James Pearce.

<sup>37</sup> Testimony of Philip Klingensmith; see also Testimony of Laban Morrill.

<sup>38</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 221.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Staker, ed. *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 204. Lee would later attribute similar attitudes to Isaac C. Haight and John M. Higbee.

<sup>40</sup> Ervin Staub, "Mass Murder," 2:320-29; also Staub, "Psychology of Mass Killings and Genocide," 14:9338-41.

<sup>41</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 221.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-21.



**John H. Cradlebaugh**

and Santa Clara, to join the Indians from the north, and make the attack upon the emigrants at the Meadows.”<sup>43</sup>

(16) Returning home to Fort Harmony, probably early Saturday morning before daylight on September 5, 1857, Major Lee encountered some Paiute bands from around Cedar City lead by sub-chiefs Moquetas and Big Bill. According to Lee their orders were to “follow up the emigrants and kill them all” and they solicited Lee to “go with them” to the Mountain Meadows and “command their forces.” Declining temporarily, Lee told them that he had orders to “send other Indians on the war-path to help them kill the emigrants” and he had to “attend to that first.” (17) Lee further admitted telling them, “I would meet them the next day and lead them.”<sup>44</sup>

*Inciting Paiute Indians to Assemble at the Mountain Meadows – September 4-8, 1857*

(18) Arriving at his home at Fort Harmony, Major Lee found his son-in-law, Carl Shirts, a Second Lieutenant in a platoon in Lee’s Fourth Battalion. Lee told Shirts “what the orders were that Haight had sent to him.” According to Lee, after some initial hesitation Shirts left to “stir up the Indians of the South, and lead them against the emigrants.”<sup>45</sup> (19) Later, Indian interpreter Samuel Knight, a private in Lee’s Fourth Battalion, received similar orders. Knight admitted directing the band of “Piedes” (Southern Paiutes) on the Santa Clara “to arm themselves and prepare to attack the emigrant train.”<sup>46</sup> (20) Meanwhile, in Cedar City, Nephi Johnson admitted attending a meeting with Isaac C. Haight before the massacre in which Haight told him of the plan to “Gather up the Indians And Distroy the train of Emigrants Who Had passed through Cedar...”<sup>47</sup> (21) The campaign to incite the Southern Paiutes was successful: The estimates of the number of Paiutes at the Mountain Meadows ranged from three hundred to six hundred. Nephi Johnson, an Indian interpreter and Second Lieutenant in Cedar City’s Company D, estimated that they incited 150 Paiutes to attack in

<sup>43</sup> Robert Kent Fielding and Dorothy S. Fielding, compilers and editors, *The Tribune Reports of John D. Lee for the Massacre at Mountain Meadows, November, 1874-April, 1877* (Higganum, CN: Kent’s Books, 2000), 278, hereinafter cited as Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*.

<sup>44</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 226.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Knight to Abraham O. Cannon, Interview, June 11, 1895, in Abraham H. Cannon Journal, Vol. 19, MS 3, 98-99, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City (hereafter Knight 1895 Interview).

<sup>47</sup> Nephi Johnson to Anton H. Lund, Letter, March 1900 (sic; 1910 is contextually more reasonable), MS 2674, fd. 18, LDS Church Archives (hereafter Johnson 1910 Statement); see also Moorman Papers.

the main massacre.<sup>48</sup> (22) Regarding the priority the militia placed on maintaining solidarity with local bands, Major Higbee recollected that “every means in right and reason was used to secure the Friendship of the surrounding Tribes of Indians. . . .”<sup>49</sup> (23) In his talks with Major Haight, Nephi Johnson conceded suggesting that the attack on the emigrants should be made farther south at Santa Clara Canyon instead of Mountain Meadows.<sup>50</sup>

*The First Attack – Monday, September 7*

(24) Several men besides John D. Lee admitted being present in the valley of the Mountain Meadows on the morning of Monday, September 7. At daybreak, Private David Tullis along with Jacob Hamblin’s adopted Indian boy, Albert Hamblin, were each in bed in the northern valley when they heard gunfire signaling the first attack on the camp in the southern valley. (25) “After the train had been camped at the spring three nights,” Albert recollected, “the fourth day in the morning, just before light, when we were all abed at the house, I was waked up by hearing a good many guns fired. I could hear guns fired every little while all day until it was dark.” (26) Tullis heard the “firing on Monday morning, and four or five mornings afterwards.” Tullis and Albert Hamblin admitted that they did not intervene, seek help or notify others.<sup>51</sup>

The first Indian attack was a sudden assault, which left seven emigrants dead and sixteen or seventeen wounded; three more would die from their wounds during the siege.<sup>52</sup> (27) John D. Lee admitted that he was “the only white man there [at the siege site].”<sup>53</sup> (28) During one Indian attack, Lee was so close to the action that emigrants’ bullets grazed his shirt and hat. (29) Later during the four-day siege, Lee was so close to their camp that the emigrants who saw him had raised a white flag. (30) Also two emigrant children who were sent to converse with Lee saw him at close range.<sup>54</sup>

*Militia Reinforcement Sent to the Meadows*

(31) Meanwhile on Monday morning in Cedar City, Private Joseph Clews was assigned to carry an express to Amos Thornton in the hamlet of Pinto near the Mountain Meadows. Fulfilling these orders, Clews and his companion rode on to the Meadows. Clews was the first Cedar City militiaman to admit that he was at the Meadows on Monday evening.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 226–27, 237–38; Higbee 1894 Statement, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 228; Testimony of Nephi Johnson.

<sup>49</sup> Higbee 1896 Statement.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson 1910 Statement. Johnson maintained that he did so “in Hope [Major I. C. Haight] Would put off the Destruction of the train until He rec Word from President Young.”

<sup>51</sup> David Tullis and Albert Hamblin to Jacob Forney, *Message of the President of the United States*, 76–78; in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 256–57.

<sup>52</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 226–27 (seven killed, sixteen wounded); also 239 (seven killed, seventeen wounded, three of the wounded later died).

<sup>53</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 227. But Lee denied that he was present at the time of the first attack.

<sup>54</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 229, 231; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 280–81.

<sup>55</sup> “Joe Clews Statement Concerning the Mountain Meadows Massacre,” typescript, Seymour Young Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City; also in Ronald W. Walker, “‘Save the Emigrants’: Joseph Clews on the Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *BYU Studies* 42 (2003), 139–52 (hereafter Clews Statement).

(32) Back in Cedar that day, Major Higbee admitted mustering a detachment of militiamen and heading west toward the Meadows.<sup>56</sup> Around sundown that evening, militia private and Cedar City herdsman Henry Higgins, herding the community stock in the common field, observed Major Higbee with a detachment of approximately twenty-five armed men in wagons or on horseback.<sup>57</sup>

(33) In the enveloping crisis, many militiamen and Indian interpreters were compelled to obey military orders or face severe repercussions. They feared punitive measures from the military officers in Cedar City if they disobeyed.<sup>58</sup> (34) Thus, Nephi Johnson resisted entreaties from Indian runners that he go to Mountain Meadows to interpret in place of Lee's Indian boy who "Lied to them so Much" that "they were tired of [him]." But when militia couriers arrived at his ranch, "they said to me that [Major] Haight said to them that I must come whether I Wanted to or Not. That He Would tell me what He wanted when I arrived at Cedar City."<sup>59</sup>

(35) Some militiamen understood that they were being assigned as a burial detail to bury the dead. Others, however, had a different understanding. According to Private Elliot Willden's reminiscent account, when he and the unidentified members of his party first rode to Mountain Meadows "they were to find occasion or something that would justify the Indians being let loose upon the emigrants...."<sup>60</sup> (36) Later that week, Second Lieutenant Nephi Johnson was given a reasonably accurate account of white-incited Indian attacks on the emigrants and said that his mission was "to settle a difficulty between John D. Lee and the Indians...."<sup>61</sup>

(37) Philip Klingensmith, the bishop in Cedar City and a militia private, admitted that the local militia was called out "for the purpose of committing acts of hostility against [the emigrants]." Further, he conceded that this call was "a regular military call from the superior officers to the subordinate officers and privates of the regiment at Cedar City and vicinity."<sup>62</sup>

(38) Over the weekend, Samuel Knight had taken an express from the Meadows to Fort Clara (and possibly Washington). He admitted that on Monday evening as he and other militiamen from Washington and Fort Clara rode toward the Meadows they met the battalion commander

<sup>56</sup> Higbee 1894 Statement, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 227.

<sup>57</sup> Henry Higgins, Affidavit, April 20, 1859, in John Cradlebaugh, "Utah and the Mormons" Speech of Hon. John Cradlebaugh, of Nevada, on the Admission of Utah as a State. Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 7, 1863 (Washington: L. Towers & Co., [1863 ?]), 42. Besides Higbee, he also identified William Bateman, Ezra Curtis, Samuel Pollock, Alexander Loveridge and William Stewart.

<sup>58</sup> Testimony of Knight, Johnson and Klingensmith; Knight 1895 Interview, 99, Marriott Special Collections; Lee, *Confessions*, 220.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson 1910 Statement, (punctuation added in statement).

<sup>60</sup> Elliott Willden to Andrew Jenson, Interview, ca. January 29-30, 1892, Andrew Jenson Interview Notes, MS 2674, LDS Church Archives; see also Moorman Papers.

<sup>61</sup> Johnson, Affidavit, November 30, 1909, typescript, MS 2674, Fd 19, LDS Church Archives (hereafter Johnson 1909 Affidavit); also in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Appendix 1, 224-26.

<sup>62</sup> Klingensmith Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 239.



of their region, Major Lee. On Tuesday, Knight and the others from the two southern settlements arrived at Mountain Meadows.<sup>63</sup> (39) Meanwhile on Tuesday morning, as Private Clews returned to Cedar City from Mountain Meadows, he encountered Higbee and his contingent bound for Mountain Meadows. Higbee ordered Clews to fall in with his unit. They arrived at the Meadows that afternoon.<sup>64</sup> (40) After assessing conditions and meeting in council to deliberate, Major Higbee admitted that he returned “at once to Cedar [City]” and “reported to Major Haight that [the] emigrant company was not killed as Lee[’s] express had stated the day before, but were fortified and were under a state of siege. . . .” Although Higbee did not see Col. Dame, he conceded that the purpose of his express was “to inform Col. William H. Dame, Commander of [the] Iron Military District, [of] the conditions of things at [Mountain Meadows].”<sup>65</sup>

*The Siege at Mid-Week*

During the week, Major John M. Higbee recalled, he observed that two or three militiamen were “painted like Indians.”<sup>66</sup> (41) At least one of the two militia camps was within sight and earshot of the emigrant camp. From that militia camp, Sergeant Samuel Pollock admitted, he and other militiamen observed Indians firing on the emigrant camp but took no action to intercede.<sup>67</sup> (42) After the sudden attack on Monday morning, September 7, the emigrants had taken defensive action to afford themselves better protection. They circled their wagons, dug holes around their wagon wheels, lowered their wagon boxes, and built other crude defensive fortifications. Observing these fortifications and the Indians’ ineffectual fighting on Wednesday, September 9, Major Lee reluctantly concluded that the Indians and the emigrants were at a standoff.<sup>68</sup> (43) The impasse created a crisis for militia commanders. “We knew,” Major Lee admitted, “that the original plan was for the Indians to do all the work, and the whites to do nothing, only to stay back and plan for them, and encourage them to do the work. Now we knew the Indians could not do the work, and we were in a sad fix.”<sup>69</sup>

*The Richey Springs Incident – Wednesday, September 9*

(44) On Wednesday evening, September 9, several miles east of the Meadows at a place called Richey Springs, an incident occurred between three escaping emigrants and a small group of Mormon pickets, reportedly Captain Joel White, Second Lieutenant William C. Stewart, and Sergeant

<sup>63</sup> Testimony of Knight; Knight 1895 Interview, 98-99.

<sup>64</sup> Clews Statement, in Walker, “Save the Emigrants,” 149.

<sup>65</sup> Higbee 1894 Statement, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 228.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 227. If Higbee was describing actions of others rather than his own actions, can this be an admission? Higbee was a major and commanding officer and these men would presumably respond to his commands. If true, this may be a superior officer’s vicarious admission of the actions of his subordinates.

<sup>67</sup> Testimony of Samuel Pollock.

<sup>68</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 231; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 281.

<sup>69</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 228.

Benjamin Arthur. Two emigrants were killed but one was only wounded and fled to the emigrant camp at the Meadows to recount the episode. Or so the Mormons believed.<sup>70</sup>

*Council Meeting at Mountain Meadows – Thursday, September 10*

(45) Fourteen militiamen or Indian interpreters recounted that they had mustered to the Mountain Meadows by Thursday, September 10. These were Majors Lee and Higbee, Captain Joel White, Captain's Adjutant Daniel Macfarlane, Second Lieutenant Nephi Johnson, Sergeants Samuel McMurdie and Samuel Pollock, and Privates William Edwards, Joseph Clews and Philip Klingensmith from the area surrounding Cedar City; Privates William Young, Elliot Willden and James Pearce from Washington; and Private Samuel Knight from Fort Clara.<sup>71</sup> (46) By Thursday evening, the militia and the Paiutes were in some sense allied. Thus, Major Lee observed, "our total force was more than fifty-four whites and more than three hundred Indians."<sup>72</sup>

(47) Also on Thursday evening, Cedar City's leading men held a military council on the grounds of the Meadows to discuss the fate of the emigrants. Contentiously they explored options and contingencies.<sup>73</sup> (48) According to Majors Higbee and Lee and Privates Klingensmith and Pearce, those in the meeting disputed and quarreled about a course of action. The partisan views ranged between two extremes: releasing the emigrants versus "using them up." Those arguing for killing the emigrants justified the action with simple logic and an argument based on absolute necessity: The emigrants knew that Mormons were involved because of the incident at Richey Springs the previous evening. Since the Indians clearly were not strong enough to rout the emigrants, the Mormons had to finish the job. If not, the escaping emigrants would send an army from California to destroy them.<sup>74</sup> Since a detachment of the U. S. Army was known to be invading southern Utah and reconnaissance patrols were, as they spoke, scouting the eastern mountains for the army's advance parties, this possibility

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 235-36; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 282; Testimony of Philip Klingensmith. These accounts have inconsistencies but they agree that the incident occurred, one or more emigrants were killed but one escaped and returned to the emigrant wagon fortification. The Richey Springs incident proved to be pivotal. As for Major Lee, is this another instance of a superior officer vicariously admitting the actions of subordinates?

<sup>71</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 220-48; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 279-87; Higbee 1894 Statement and Macfarlane Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 226-35 and 235-38, respectively; Testimony of Johnson, Knight, Klingensmith, McMurdie, Pearce, Pollock, White and Young; William Edwards, Affidavit, May 14, 1924, MS A 1112, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, (hereafter Edwards Affidavit); Clews Statement, in Walker, "Save the Emigrants," 145-52; Elliot Willden, Interview, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 232.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 232-37; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 281-84; Testimony of Klingensmith and Pearce.

<sup>74</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 234-36; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 282; Higbee 1894 Statement, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 229-30; Testimony of Klingensmith and Pearce.

<sup>75</sup> James H. Martineau, "A Scouting Party," in Julius F. Wells, ed., *The Contributor*, Vol. 11 (Salt Lake City: The Contributor Company, 1890), 397. The Martineau party was scouting for invaders. Returning from

was intolerable.<sup>75</sup> (49) According to John D. Lee, the view that prevailed was that the emigrants knew full well that “the Mormons had interposed.” That is, in the Wednesday evening episode at Richey Springs the wounded emigrant had retreated to the emigrant corral and revealed that Mormons were behind the Indian attacks.<sup>76</sup> An additional factor for Lee may have been that he, too, had been seen: first, from a distance by the emigrants and second, at close range by two emigrant boys.<sup>77</sup>

*The Final Massacre – Friday, September 11*

(50) Thirteen militia informants – Majors Lee and Higbee, Captain Joel White, Captain’s Adjutant Daniel Macfarlane, Second Lieutenant Nephi Johnson, Sergeants Samuel McMurdie and Samuel Pollock and Privates Klingensmith, Joseph Clews, William Edwards, William Young, James Pearce and Samuel Knight – confessed to planning and/or executing a strategy to decoy the emigrants from their fortifications in order to attack them.<sup>78</sup> (51) The plan, Lee and Klingensmith admitted, was to eliminate all men, women and older children. If they could not escape to California, the militia reasoned, they could not send yet more troops against southern Utah’s already precarious defenses.<sup>79</sup> (52) Lee and Nephi Johnson admitted that the plan included killing women and older children and that Paiutes were to dispatch them.<sup>80</sup> (53) Nephi Johnson admitted that on the morning of the massacre, he translated orders to the Paiutes to conceal themselves. He also translated the order for the subsequent attack.<sup>81</sup>

(54) Lee admitted going to the emigrant wagon circle and delivering deceptive terms of surrender to the emigrants to induce them to surrender their arms and abandon their wagon circle.<sup>82</sup> (55) At least twelve men confessed to being present at the Mountain Meadows during this deceptive ploy.<sup>83</sup> (56) Eleven militiamen admitted that the emigrants were formed

their three hundred mile scouting expedition, they were prepared to report to Col. Dame on September 12 that “the rumor of invasion was false.” Instead, Dame was inspecting the dead at Mountain Meadows where just such invasion rumors had contributed to disastrous overreaction.

<sup>76</sup> Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 282; Testimony of Klingensmith.

<sup>77</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 231; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 281.

<sup>78</sup> Testimony of Johnson, Klingensmith, Knight, McMurdie, Pearce, Pollock, White and Young; Higbee 1894 Statement and Macfarlane Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 230-31 and 236-37, respectively; Lee, *Confessions*, 233-48 and Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 283; Edwards Affidavit; and Clews Statement, in Walker, “Saving the Emigrants,” 150-51.

<sup>79</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 231; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 283-84; Testimony of Klingensmith; with further corroboration in Elliot Willden, Interview.

<sup>80</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 236-37; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 283; Testimony of Johnson.

<sup>81</sup> Johnson 1909 Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 224; Statement of Nephi Johnson to Francis M. Lyman, September 21, 1895, typescript, Francis M. Lyman Diary, LDS Church Archives; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

<sup>82</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 238-40; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 284.

<sup>83</sup> Testimony of Johnson, Klingensmith, Knight, McMurdie, Pearce, Pollock, White and Young; Higbee 1894 Statement and Macfarlane Affidavit in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 226-35 and 235-37, respectively; Lee, *Confessions*, 233-41; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 284-85; and Edwards Affidavit.

into a northbound column of march and separated into three groups with small children and a few wounded adults at the head of the line, women and older children (from seven or eight years of age and above) in the middle, and men in the rear.<sup>84</sup> (57) Albert Hamblin conceded that on the day of the massacre he and fellow Indian boy, John Knight, observed the emigrants leaving their fortified wagon corral. They also saw “where the Indians were hid in the oak bushes and sage right by the side of the road a mile or more on their route.” Albert said to his companion that he “would like to know what the emigrants left their wagons for,” as they were going into “a worse fix than ever they saw.”<sup>85</sup> (58) Three militiamen admitted being in one of the two militia camps within sight of the emigrants during the ruse and subsequent massacre. These were Sergeant Samuel Pollack of Cedar City and Privates William Young and James Pearce of Washington.<sup>86</sup>

(59) At the time of the massacre, some militiamen acknowledged their particular role or location on the ground. Nephi Johnson had acted as Indian interpreter and was positioned on the flank of a hill overlooking the northbound caravan.<sup>87</sup> (60) Two men—Captain Joel White and Private Philip Klingensmith—admitted being present in the militia guard alongside emigrant men at the end of the column leaving the emigrant camp. (61) As the massacre commenced, Private Philip Klingensmith confessed to firing on an emigrant beside him in the column with intent to kill him. (62) Further, the clear implication of Klingensmith’s testimony was that the man at whom he fired had not survived.<sup>88</sup> (63) Many militiamen recalled the crack of the first gunfire while Samuel Pollock recalled the pall of smoke that rose over the field.<sup>89</sup>

(64) Meanwhile, at the front of the column, Major John D. Lee, Sergeant Samuel McMurdie and Private Samuel Knight, admitted being with the wagons of small children and the wounded at the head of the column of march.<sup>90</sup> (65) McMurdie implicitly confessed to killing one or more of the wounded in the wagons.<sup>91</sup> (66) Shortly before his own execution, Lee confessed to killing several wounded emigrants in or around the wagons.<sup>92</sup> (67) Many of the militiamen admitted the fact of the massacre through the

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. except Edwards Affidavit.

<sup>85</sup> Albert Hamblin to James H. Carleton, Interview, ca. May 20, 1859, in Carleton, “The Mountain Meadows Massacre: A Special Report. . . .” 20. Young Albert Hamblin was not a militiaman. However, his interests and sympathies lay with the Mormons. Thus, this seems to be an authentic and credible primary witness admission.

<sup>86</sup> Testimony of Pearce, Pollock and Young.

<sup>87</sup> Testimony of Johnson; compare Johnson 1909 Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 225.

<sup>88</sup> Testimony of Klingensmith and White.

<sup>89</sup> Testimony of Pollock.

<sup>90</sup> Testimony of Knight and McMurdie; Lee, *Confessions*, 241–47; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 284–85.

<sup>91</sup> Testimony of McMurdie.

<sup>92</sup> *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, March 24, 1877, also in *The Tribune Reports*, 262; Collin R. Hakes, “To Whom it May Concern and especially my own family,” April 24, 1916, typescript, MS 2674, fd. 1, 2 and 32, LDS Church Archives. Lee steadfastly denied this in his statements. But he was heard to confess this before his execution.

combined efforts of detachments from the Iron County militia and allied Indians.<sup>93</sup>

*The Aftermath to the Massacre*

The following day, a militia party including Col. William H. Dame of Parowan and Major Isaac C. Haight of Cedar City arrived at the scene of the massacre. Lee briefed Dame and Haight and these two immediately fell into quarreling with one another.<sup>94</sup> (68) Majors Haight and Lee and Private (also bishop) Klingensmith enjoined secrecy on those from Cedar City because “they didn’t want it to get out.”<sup>95</sup> (69) Returning to Fort Harmony, Lee and his adopted Indian son, Clem, overtook a band of Paiutes leaving the Meadows for their traditional lands and exchanged greetings with them. Then, Lee admitted, the Paiutes said “I was their Captain, and that they were going to Harmony with me as my men.”<sup>96</sup> (70) Captain Joel White, Second Lieutenant Nephi Johnson and Privates Klingensmith and Thomas T. Willis admitted that much of the emigrants’ wagons and livestock was taken to the tithing office at Cedar City and later sold at auction.<sup>97</sup>

(71) As the years passed and the panic surrounding the Utah War receded in memory, prejudice grew among all, non-Mormon and Mormon alike, against the perpetrators of the massacre, particularly the militia leaders. Major John M. Higbee came to feel ashamed because of “the cowardly part” they had played.<sup>98</sup> (72) Even some of those whose role was limited to carrying expresses and who were not even present during the final massacre, showed a consciousness of guilt: For example, nearly two decades later, Joseph Clews wrote: “. . . [O]h! what a horrible remembrance of those five days! They have been the bane of my existence, have kept me in the background and in the shade, have kept me out of society and away from people I should like to have associated with. Such has been my lot or strange fatality.”<sup>99</sup> Nephi Johnson’s tortured dreams on his deathbed in 1919, more than six decades after the massacre, bear silent but eloquent witness to how some militiamen were devastated by what they saw and did.<sup>100</sup>

How do these statements hold up against the usual measures of historical reliability, credibility and verification? Ideally, each primary witness would

<sup>93</sup> Testimony of Johnson, Klingensmith, Knight, McMurdie, Pearce, Pollock, White and Young; Higbee 1894 Statement and Macfarlane Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 230-31 and 236-37, respectively; Lee, *Confessions*, 233-41; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 284-86.

<sup>94</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 245-47; Lee-Howard Statement, *The Tribune Reports*, 286-87.

<sup>95</sup> Testimony of Johnson; also Testimony of Klingensmith; Klingensmith Affidavit, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 241.

<sup>96</sup> Lee, *Confessions*, 249.

<sup>97</sup> Testimony of Johnson, Klingensmith, John Sherrett, White and Thomas Willis.

<sup>98</sup> Higbee 1894 Statement, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 232.

<sup>99</sup> Clews Statement, in Walker, “Save the Emigrants,” 152.

<sup>100</sup> Juanita Brooks, *Quicksand and Sage: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, Publishers, 1982), 228-29. At the deathbed of aging Nephi Johnson, Brooks observed his troubled delirium and cries of, “Blood! BLOOD! BLOOD!” Brooks concluded, “[The massacre] was on his mind right up to the end.”



provide a first-person account or his account would be recorded verbatim by a third person. Here virtually every matter being recounted comes from a primary witness. Many of these were first-person accounts or their substantial equivalent. For each such statement, we have established that it is an *authentic primary witness account*.

Establishing the *credibility* of the account, however, requires that we first consider witness competence. We have satisfied ourselves that these witnesses had adequate senses, intelligence and memory to observe, interpret and recall that to which they testified. But what about the witnesses' character, motives and biases? Each of the militia participants was involved in an atrocious massacre, so the motivation to suppress, distort or justify was great. But in each case we have concentrated on the areas of their testimony in which *they have acted exactly contrary to their motivation to suppress the truth*. Those are the areas in which the witnesses *confessed their involvement in crimes*. We have seen that just such "confessions against interest" are the most reliable elements in the accounts. Furthermore, in uncovering confessional elements in witness narratives, we have implicitly weighed their internal coherence. We have also noted many instances in which some witnesses corroborated the evidence of others.

There are, of course, a number of limitations. Although multiple witnesses verify many elements of the massacre narrative, not all elements are unified. Further, for some key witnesses—Isaac C. Haight and William H. Dame, for instance—we have no statements at all. For some key events—the emigrant-settler confrontation in Cedar City, for instance—we have inadequate accounts of what actually transpired.

Then there is the matter of the reminiscent nature of many accounts. Many of the earliest eyewitness accounts were recorded in spring 1859, eighteen months after the massacre. The militia witnesses in the Lee trials were testifying nearly two decades after the events they described. Many of the interviews in the 1890s came more than thirty-five years after the fact. Finally, William Edward's 1925 affidavit came more than sixty-five years after the massacre.

Yet this may not be the insuperable problem that one might suppose. For instance, there is little reason to doubt the 1925 affidavit of William Edwards in which he swore under oath that he was in the massacre. Similarly, why should we doubt Samuel Knight's 1895 account in which he admitted carrying orders from Mountain Meadows to Santa Clara to incite local Indians to attack the emigrant train? Our common experience on the September 11, 2001, disaster provides a simple example of the nature of memory formation. The traumatic nature of the events of that day guarantees that we will recall many events of that tragic day for many decades. Yet few of us even today recall what we did either the day before or the day after the disaster. Similarly, Knight could recall the adrenaline-pumping ride to Santa Clara to deliver his terrible message. For the same reason, Knight and many other militiamen had distinct, and judging by their consistency,

accurate memories of the main massacre on September 11, 1857.

What about hermeneutical issues? Hermeneutic studies argue that even seemingly straightforward narratives raise a number of problems of interpretation ranging from obvious to subtle. I have striven for reasonable interpretations based on considerations of authorial intent, context, internal consistency and other factors. The reader will judge how well I have succeeded in this difficult task. Yet given its continuing rise in prominence, hermeneutics will only loom larger in the future. I invite those of this generation and the next to grapple more deeply than I have with hermeneutic questions.

Despite these limitations, however, the ultimate test of any historical narrative is coherence. Coherence encompasses internal consistency of a witness's statement, consistency of that statement with the witness's other statements, and consistency among all the witnesses. I submit that from these confessions all the major elements of the massacre have emerged as a largely coherent whole. While they are not the whole truth about the massacre (something we may never fathom), we have reasonably established that these corroborated confessions are highly reliable. They form the bedrock of what we can know about the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

### **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation**

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## “Surely This City is Bound to Shine”: Descriptions of Salt Lake City by Western-Bound Emigrants, 1849–1868

By FRED E. WOODS

**S**urely this city is bound to shine,” so wrote forty-niner H. C. St. Clair of Springfield, Illinois as he passed through Salt Lake City on his way to the California gold fields.<sup>1</sup> Between 1849 and 1868, thousands of emigrants passed through this desert oasis, recording their descriptions of this unique Mormon utopia and its isolated inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> These two decades, when the Great Basin began to “blossom as the rose,” saw a unique period of overland emigrant travel, providing more time for

**Salt Lake City ca. 1872**  
UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fred E. Woods is a Brigham Young University professor and holds a Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding. He is also the Executive Director of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> H. C. St. Clair, “Journal of a Tour to California, 1849–1855,” July 31, 1849, typescript, Beineke Library, Yale University.

<sup>2</sup> John S. McCormick, “Salt Lake City,” *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Kent Powell, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 481, notes that at the end of this two-decade interval (1870), more than 90 percent of the city’s twelve thousand inhabitants were Mormon. However, by 1890, the non-Mormon population made up half of the city’s population of forty-five thousand inhabitants. For an excellent new treatise concerning European travelers passing through Utah Territory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Michael W. Homer, *On the Way to Somewhere Else: European Sojourners in the Mormon West, 1834–1930*, Volume 8 in the Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier Series (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006).

observation than a hurried visit by train would allow. Some migrants stayed only a day or two, just long enough to obtain provisions or make needed repairs. This was especially true of the argonauts, from whom we have the largest number of accounts. In contrast to these short visits, some forty-niners spent the winter before pushing on to the gold fields.<sup>3</sup> John D. Unruh Jr. estimates that in the mid-nineteenth century, the average length of an emigrant's stay while passing through the famed city was about six and a half days.<sup>4</sup>

While M. Jules Remy's *Journey to the Great Salt Lake City* (1855) and Sir Richard F. Burton's *City of the Saints* (1861) provide what are now well-known accounts of the traveler's view of this nineteenth-century Mormon oasis, the non-LDS emigrant voice is more of a whisper, though at the same time it is significant and valid.

The emigrant voice provides a unique written expression, which in most cases describes an immediate, honest reaction to this much-celebrated Mormon refuge. It is thus unlike a visitor's deliberate, crafted conception, penned for profit.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, however, descriptions written for publication generally agree with emigrant accounts which paint, for the most part, a favorable image of Salt Lake City and its residents.

While descriptions of what Sir Richard Burton called the "City of the Saints" may seem generally similar, regardless of the author, the reader is advised to be sensitive to details of style and emphasis in their descriptions of J. F. Baldwin's "Celestial City" and its inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> Thus, while Remy's pen to paper is French and Burton's is British, the emigrant pen, in the examples that follow, is uniquely American. Burton described Salt Lake City as a "Mormon Mecca," having just made his famous pilgrimage to Arabia as Mirza Abdullah. An emigrant from Missouri might choose to pass through Salt Lake City incognito or simply avoid the city entirely; writing simply that the disgusting Mormons hated the Missourians.

Within the American emigrant voice, there were regional differences, which influence individual views. Overland travelers passing through Salt Lake City, who had encountered Mormons in their home states of Illinois or Missouri, for example, may have viewed the Saints differently than one who had not had previous contact with them. While some written

<sup>3</sup> An excellent work telling the story of those who spent the winter is found in Brigham D. Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners in Great Salt Lake City 1849-1850* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983). Madsen estimates that about one-third of the argonauts chose the route that would take them through Salt Lake City.

<sup>4</sup> John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants, and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 308.

<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Smith, "The Curious Meet the Mormons: Images from Travel Narratives, 1850s and 1860s," *Journal of Mormon History* 24 (Fall 1998): 155-81 examined eighteen travel narratives written between 1849 and 1867, and published between 1851 and 1872.

<sup>6</sup> The name "Celestial City" is used by J. F. Baldwin in his overland account titled, "Diary kept by J. F. Baldwin while Crossing the Plains in 1850," June 25, 1850, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

accounts presented a preconceived, biased view of the Saints, mostly because of their practice of polygamy, several others, tainted by Mormon tales, seemed to be transformed by a people who did not appear to be the vile sinners the visitors had read or heard about.

This paper examines some emigrants' views in distinct categories: descriptions of the landscape and buildings, trade, visits to the celebrated Mormon prophet Brigham Young, the practice of polygamy, Pioneer Day celebrations, and attendance at Mormon meetings.

During the summer of 1849 when Amos Piatt Josselyn was passing through Salt Lake City, he wrote home to his wife in Ohio:

I will now give you some kind of an idea of the Mormon City. It is laid out in an oblong square, four miles long and two miles wide; streets very wide; the size of the lots are 40 acres, and about one-half of these lots are occupied. The buildings are mostly small; they are built some of logs, but mostly of what they call dobies (sun-dried brick). There are in the valley first Grist mills and eight or nine saw mills and two or three more buildings. Their lumber is pine and fir. They have to haul their firewood ten miles, for there is none grown in this part of the valley; consequently, they have to go to the mountains for it.<sup>7</sup>

The following year, J. F. Baldwin, also emigrating from Ohio, described the splendor of the Salt Lake Valley, noting, "Reached the Celestial City at ten o'clock A. M. We found here a beautiful city, on a sloping plain. The city was laid out in squares. Beautiful snow water from the mountains was running down on all sides of the streets, for the purpose of irrigation."<sup>8</sup>

In 1851, emigrants had to first pass through a quarantine station set up just outside the outskirts of the city at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, before entering the luscious valley.<sup>9</sup> John Clark of Virginia, who emigrated west after a failed business venture in Cincinnati, described the station on July 12, 1852: "Here we found a Quarantine office with men to examine the sick & General condition of the different trains before Entering the city

<sup>7</sup> Letter of Amos Piatt Josselyn to his wife dated July 15, 1849, from the City of the Great Salt Lake in "Box 12, SLC." California State Library, Sacramento. I copied this letter from a hand-written transcription made from the original, apparently by a relative named John H. Josselyn. This letter was pointed out to me in "Box 12, SLC" by the principal librarian at the California State Library, Gary F. Kurutz, whom I wish to thank. In this same year, Robert Bond, "Diary of Overland Trip to Great Salt Lake City," July 15, 1849, Beineke Library, indicated that "the houses are built of blue clay brick." Three years later, the Nancy Jane and H. Bradley Journal, June 28, 1852, Beineke Library, notes, "the houses [are] all made of adobei Bricks." A dozen years later, "The Journal of Hiram Alton Ox Teaming From Ohio To The Idaho Gold Diggins In 1864," for the date of July 21, 1864, described the houses of Salt Lake City as being made of "white dooby."

<sup>8</sup> "Diary kept by J. F. Baldwin while Crossing the Plains in 1850," June 25, 1850, Bancroft Library.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, "Wilford Woodruff, Intellectual Progress, and the Growth of an Amateur Scientific and Technological Tradition in Early Territorial Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59 (Spring 1991): 185, notes that the mouth of Emigration Canyon was at one time referred to as "Quarantine Gardens and later Deseret Gardens." In a *Deseret News* article dated April 8, 1851, and quoted in James R. Clark, comp. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966) 2:69, the Fifth Epistle of the First Presidency states, "Hitherto, California emigrants have been accustomed to leave their sick in our hands, at a heavy expense, and depart without notice, . . . but since the organization of the municipality, quarantine has been introduced." This epistle seems to be what launched the quarantine station this same year.





which is now in sight 6 miles forward.”<sup>10</sup> During this same month and year, another emigrant noted, “Quarantine ground lies at the gate of this canon and here is a hospital, or what pretends to be one, established by Governor Young, where all, both great and small, Jew or Gentile, are obliged to report.”<sup>11</sup> The *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* reported in 1852, “The Quarantine, with its old agent, Dr. Clinton, has been re-established during this season of emigration. A temporary hospital has also been in course of erection at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, for those afflicted with infectious diseases.”<sup>12</sup>

***The Deseret Store on the northeast corner of Main Street and South Temple in Salt Lake City.***

James Butterfield of Wisconsin remembered that by the close of 1853 the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple was “four feet high.”<sup>13</sup> A year later,

<sup>10</sup> Journal of “John Clark of Virginia” July 12, 1850, Beineke Library.

<sup>11</sup> *Overland to the Gold Fields of California in 1852: The Journal of John Hawkins Clark, Expanded and Revised from Notes Made During the Journey*, ed. Louise Barry, Reprinted from the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, August 1942, (Printed by Kansas State Printing Plant, W. C. Austin, State Printer, Topeka, Kansas, 1942), 271. The author expresses appreciation to LDS Church Archivist Randall Dixon, who lent him his file titled “Quarantine Station,” which included this reference.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Elder Robert Campbell to the *Latter-day Saints Millennial Star* XIV, no. 32 (October 2, 1852):507. Two years later, the Salt Lake City Council Minutes, dated August 26, 1854, noted that J. [Jeter] Clinton, reporting on Quarantine, “the council had visited the quarantine ground at various times, that he had erected a Building thereon, had employed John Lyon to attend the same 77 days at \$1.50 per day – that the California Emigration had about closed – and that he left it for the Council to determine what should be allowed for services rendered thereby. It was motioned and carried that Jeter Clinton have \$200 for services rendered the past season at the Quarantine.” Dixon file “Quarantine Station.” In the summer of 1853, William Richards Brown wrote, “traveled down . . . Canyon to the Quarantine Station; and were questioned as to our health &c &c after leaving the quarantine we had a fine view of the Great Salt Lake City; we were struck with astonishment at seeing a city after being away from one so long.” Journal of William Richard Brown, August 1, 1853, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Historical Department. Hereinafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Recollections of James Butterfield, 12, typescript, California State Library.

Mary Burrell of Illinois observed, "The Temple is quite a work. They are about building a foundation for a new Temple."<sup>14</sup> Daniel C. White noted in July 1854 that the city was, "well laid out & commodiously situated [.] The streets being broad & square large. The soil is well irrigated & buildings mostly adoby Saw the Tabernacle & wall."<sup>15</sup>

Six years later, Mary C. Fish, emigrating from Iowa, reported, "The City is laid out with considerable taste the streets all being wide & crossing each other in straight lines: The houses are built of adobes or unbaked brick & the water privileges are such that there is a stream of water running by every door: There are several beautiful dwellings here first of which is the residence of Brigham Young which is fit for a prince."<sup>16</sup>

Writing to his wife in August of 1862, Dr. Charles L. Anderson emigrating from St. Paul, Minnesota, recorded:

After 3 months incessant toil and dangers I have at last reached a haven of rest, for at least a few days. Last evening just before sundown we drove into the city of "Latter day Saints." . . . All of a sudden we emerged from a long narrow and steep canon to behold Salt Lake glimmering in the bright sun light of evening, 25 miles distant and the city - at our feet. It was with feelings of joy that I beheld streets beautifully ornamented with shade trees and silver brooks by each sidewalk. Almost every garden is an orchard loaded with apples, peaches, plums &c."<sup>17</sup>

Three years later, Ruth Shackelford, emigrating from Missouri, recorded in the late summer of 1865, "We got into Salt Lake City last night. It is a beautiful place. The town is laid out in squares with nice shade trees all over town. . . . The houses are all built of adobe made in the shape of brick and dried by the sun. Some of them are plastered on the outside and painted white with nice porches in front."<sup>18</sup>

These descriptions, from various years between 1849 and 1865, provide a consistent portrait of what the city of the Saints looked like to thousands of emigrants who passed through its streets: a beautiful city in the mountains, consisting of wide streets, a complex irrigation system, gardens and shade trees, buildings built of adobe and the beginnings of an impressive temple.

While descriptions of the landscape and buildings of Salt Lake City were fairly consistent, descriptions of trade differed according to the current state of the economy as each emigrant passed through the city.

At times, trade in the city of the Saints could be mutually advantageous to the Mormon settlers, as well as to passing emigrants. For instance, in 1849, James Abram Kleiser, emigrating from Lafayette, Indiana, explained, "We traded for some butter, milk and cheese and made arrangements with

<sup>14</sup> Mary Burrell's Book, by Mary Burrell, June 30, 1854, Beineke Library. This a diary of an overland journey from Council Bluffs to California in 1854.

<sup>15</sup> Diary of Daniel C. White, "Overland trip to California 1854," July 15, 1854, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>16</sup> Mary C. Fish diary ms. And related materials: 1860 May- September, Bancroft Library.

<sup>17</sup> Letter, Dr. Charles L. Anderson to his wife dated August 10, 1862, in Charles L. Anderson Diary and Letters, 1862-1866, microfilm, Bancroft Library.

<sup>18</sup> Diary of Mrs. Frank Shackelford, August 28-29, 1865, LDS Church Archives.



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two Mormons to go with us and take a skiff and ferry us over Weber and Bear Rivers.”<sup>19</sup> **Salt Lake City's Temple Block — looking south.**

This same year, Townsend Beeson wrote to his brother in St. Louis, “The Mormon people here are much benefited by the emigrants supplying them with many articles at a cheap rate; on the other hand the Emigrants can here supply themselves with vegetables of the Mormons.”<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. Nicholas Harrison Karchner, an emigrant from Ohio, remembered how eager the Saints were for emigrants to land in their city: “Landed in the great City at night can see, Salt lake from the City. hadent hardly got to camp till we were surrounded with people trying to sell his vegetables.”<sup>21</sup>

In the summer of 1850, Dan Carpenter of Missouri described costs of various goods while doing a bit of business on Main Street:

Moved down into town Exchanged fruit for flour. 1 for 2 of flour. Sold bacon for 25¢ per 100 lbs Could have sold all I had, if I could [have] waited. Fruit, Sugar, Coffee and Liquor would bring big prices 50¢ to 75 lb. for fruit - Sugar and coffee 40 to 50. Duties 2 ? pr ct Liquors, your own price. Duties 50 pr. ct. on amt. sold. The luxuries of life would pay a fine profit. Flour is scarce now at 25\$ tho crops are excelent. When ready for market, cheese 25 to 37 Tho’ a man can get eggs, Butter and vegetable of most any kind of Fruit, Sugar, Coffee tea or bacon but money won’t buy them. There are at this season very few dry goods until the Mormon Stores came on which is 2 or 3 weeks later Ribbons, Laces, Slippers, Parasols and the like would bring a big price - Prints, Domestic etc 20 to 25¢.<sup>22</sup>

At other times, trade in the city was less advantageous to one or both parties. On the same day that Carpenter recorded trade prices, Henry

<sup>19</sup> Recollections of James Abram Kleiser, typescript, Bancroft Library.

<sup>20</sup> Letter, Townsend Beeson to his brother B. F. Townsend, St. Louis, August 7, 1849, California State Library. I wish to thank Gary F. Kurutz, principal librarian at the California State Library, for supplying me a transcript copy of it.

<sup>21</sup> Diary of Mary Smith Karchner, 1862, April 13-Aug. 24, July 10, 1862, typescript California State Library.

<sup>22</sup> Journal of Dan Carpenter, July 23, 1850, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

Sterling Bloom, in a letter home to his wife Eliza in Illinois, complained, "Everything that emigrants want to buy here is extravagantly high and anything we have to sell is very low we can scarcely give it away."<sup>23</sup>

Some overlanders were also disappointed when expectations of needed provisions went unmet. Ohio emigrant J. F. Baldwin, who also passed through the Great Basin oasis in the summer of 1850, wrote, "At this place we expected to lay in a new supply of provisions, but were disappointed. There were none to be had. Many of the inhabitants there had been living on meat for two weeks without any flour. Brigham Young had given orders to his people not to supply the Gentiles with provisions as they were short themselves."<sup>24</sup>

One emigrant expressed apparent disdain when, as he put it, a wealthy English blacksmith, "sly as a fox, . . . did not omit to charge the gentile pilgrims a very profitable price for his work [and] charged me five dollars for re-shoeing my saddle mule, and for repairs of wagons and so forth."<sup>25</sup> Perhaps John Hawkins Clark of Cincinnati said it best. In 1852, he summarized what he perceived as inflated prices in the city of the Saints: "Visiting Salt Lake valley and the city was something like taking in the Irishman's show: it cost nothing to get in, but a great deal to get out."<sup>26</sup>

Just as descriptions of trade differed from emigrant to emigrant, descriptions of Brigham Young varied as well. Emigrants generally described him as an impressive and capable leader. In a letter to the *Princeton Post*, one traveler noted, "I had the good fortune to see Gov. Young, or as he is here very generally called 'Brother Brigham.' he is Large and well built man, with a fine intellectual countenance, and commanding appearance."<sup>27</sup>

Two other emigrants visited President Young in order to deliver letters sent by Latter-day Saint friends from Iowa City. "After dining with him he took them in a fine turnout around the city, inviting the emigrants to rest a month partaking of the hospitality of the colony. After a rest of two weeks they again took the road with a generous supply of provision, feeling that Brigham Young was a truly good and generous man."<sup>28</sup>

One emigrant, anxious to see what he referred to as the "great Mogul of Mormondom himself," was "sternly denied admission" to Young's home. However, while attending the theater, the same prejudiced gentleman later

<sup>23</sup> Letter, Henry Sterling Bloom to his wife Eliza in Illinois, July 23–25, 1850, in Henry Sterling Bloom gold rush letters and Bloom family miscellany Collection, 1850–1867, California State Library.

<sup>24</sup> Diary kept by J. F. Baldwin while Crossing the Plains in 1850, June 25, 1850, Bancroft Library.

<sup>25</sup> Autobiography of Frederick Rehwinkel, 354, Beineke Library.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in John D. Unruh Jr. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrations and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 312, and Louise Barry, ed. "The Journal of John Hawkins Clark, Expanded and Revised from Notes Made During the Journey," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 11 (August 1942).

<sup>27</sup> Great Salt Lake City, Letter to editor for the *Princeton Post* dated (February 23, 1854), MS 13914, microfilm, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. M. Etta Cartwright Coxe, "Hon. A. [Abraham] Owen: Reminiscences of His Early Life and Pioneer Days," 3, Bancroft Library.

described beholding “Brigham Young occupying his private box in the opera-house during several performances.” Further noting, “I was satisfied in my mind that he lorded it over his flock, like a Sultan of Turkey over his unfortunate subjects.”<sup>29</sup>

Another visitor described Brigham “more like a Methodist parson or deacon than the President of a great church, of which he is the chief ruler.” At a church meeting, this same migrant noted that periodically, President Young would “add or explain a little, . . . which the speaker repeated and adopted.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1860, Clara E. Downes, a twenty-four-year-old single woman journeying to California from Michigan, described Brigham as “a very good looking man, very. there is something noble & commanding in his looks & bearing. He looks about - 40 yrs. he is 59 years of age.” She also observed his preaching in church, noting that he “speaks very well indeed & has good gestures. He has also a very small white hand, which he used to his advantage of course, he denounced the gentiles. he said that the people of the east say that Mormonism is the work of the devil ‘if that is so’ said he ‘then glory to the devil, for I am so happy in it.’ his remarks were quite funny & some, quite sensible.”<sup>31</sup>

While emigrants generally had favorable impressions of Brigham Young, notwithstanding the negative slant the press took toward him and polygamy, another popular topic in the press was the most negative feature described in passing emigrant accounts. For example, on August 29, 1858, Richard Thomas Ackley, a native of New Jersey emigrating from Sidney, Iowa, wrote, “The mormon people as a body I like very much, I have seen none that were more hospitable than they, and there is but one great draw back to the sect and that is their plurality of wives which seems very strange to us who have been taught differently.”<sup>32</sup>

Downes, who left a favorable view of the city and its inhabitants, had a



**Brigham Young**

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<sup>29</sup> Autobiography of Frederick Rehwinkel, 355–56, Beineke Library.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, *From Lake Erie to the Pacific – An Overland Trip in 1850–51. Life on the Great Plains. A Few Weeks Among the Saints* (np., 1876), 20, 25, Bancroft Library.

<sup>31</sup> Journal Across the plains: kept by Miss Clara E. Downes and most humbly dedicated to her sister, Miss Elizabeth M. Downes, 1860 May 7– August 15, film 2446, Bancroft Library. Melody M. Miyamoto, “‘A Novel Sight’: The 1860 Overland Adventure of Clara E. Downes,” *Overland Journal* (Fall 2002): 86–97, provide a vivid picture of her journey to California, which includes some biographical information I have gleaned.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Thomas Ackley, “A Trip across the plains in 1858,” August 29, 1858, Beineke Library.





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***The Lion House and Beehive House.***

jaundiced attitude towards the institution of polygamy which is readily apparent in her comments on this unusual practice: “A high wall surrounds the building [the Lion house] from which his [Brigham Young’s] poor wives might as well attempt to fly as to escape. If one of their women attempts to leave them tis sheer death. Poor creatures. I know they must be miserable.”<sup>33</sup>

Two years before Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt presented the first public address on the subject of plural marriage, passing traveler Silas Newcomb, who came west after his mother died and was bankrupted by his business partner, entered the Salt Lake Valley on his way to Sacramento.<sup>34</sup> On July 8, 1850, Newcomb described what he considered “an oppressed and deluded people.” A week later he wrote, “polygamy, to an unlimited extent, is tolerated and forms a part of their creed. They claim that it is in accordance with the Bible.”<sup>35</sup>

California-bound emigrant William G. Johnston of Pittsburgh apparently had formed a negative opinion of the Saints in Utah, particularly shaped while in Missouri, even before he reached Salt Lake City. On June 23, 1849, he wrote, “The accounts previously received concerning the Mormons, especially while we were in Missouri, had not led to the forma-

<sup>33</sup> Clara E. Downes, “Journal Across the Plains,” July 8, 1860, pp. 73–74, Bancroft Library.

<sup>34</sup> Pratt delivered the discourse at a conference held in Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852, wherein he defended the principle by citing the righteous practice of patriarchs, as noted in the Bible. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 185–86, note that this was the first public address on the subject, although the doctrine had been introduced to the Saints during the Nauvoo period.

<sup>35</sup> Overland Journey from Diary, Walworth County, Wisconsin, to Hangtown, California by Silas Newcomb, July 8, 15, 1850. Beineke Library.

tion of favorable opinions in our minds, and an opportunity now seemed opening up to us by which, to some extent, we might be able to confirm or revise these reports.” Having entered the city, Johnston then noted that there appeared to be more provisions in his company than could be found in the city, “excepting doubtless the harems of Brigham Young, and those of the other church dignitaries.” Johnston then summarized his experience: “How like in many of its physical and possibly moral aspects to that which we have attempted to portray, is the scene which we confronted to our gaze. Another Sodom!”<sup>36</sup>

Some emigrants who happened to be passing through Salt Lake City on the 24th of July left eyewitness accounts of the grand Pioneer Day celebrations. In 1849, W. W. Call of Boscawen, Massachusetts, was present for the first Mormon Pioneer Day celebration in the Salt Lake Valley:

We arrived at Salt Lake City on the 20th of July [1849] within a day or two of the second anniversary of the settlement of the valley of the mormons. They had made preparations for celebrating it July 24 on as grand a scale as their circumstances would permit, more than 12,000 had assembled from all parts of the settled districts. They had not, as a general thing been very, accomodating to the emigrants – had denied them entrance to their city, and refused to sell them provisions, but we treated them respectfully and were permitted to make our camp upon one of the vacant blocks in their city limits. They even invited us to participate with them in the celebration and we were not slow to accept. The feast consisting of all the dainties and luxuries attainable in a new country was spread upon a great number of rough boards (covered with white cloth) tables of great length and occupying more than 2 acres of ground. The meats were chiefly game – birds in great variety, elk, antelope, deer, mountain sheep &c. vegetables were scarce, but there was a great abundance of puddings and pies. In the early part of the day a lofty liberty pole was raised with appropriate ceremonies, and several speeches were made by the leading men of the community. Brigham Young spoke at length, recounting the trials and persecutions the mormons had suffered – and seemingly in anticipation of a collision with our government, at that time imminent, remarked as I well remember “Fellow citizens! we stand here with one foot on this liberty pole and the other on this broad and beautiful valley, and d–n the man or set of men who interferes. This was there first celebration after leaving missouri, and in every point of view, it has ever seemed to me, to have been the most remarkable public demonstration I ever witnessed. we were eight days in Salt Lake, and with the exception of the feast, lived almost exclusively on green peas and such other fresh vegetables as we could obtain – our object being, to avoid scurvy, than a common disease among the emigrants.”<sup>37</sup>

The following year, John Litsey, emigrating from Mahaska County, Iowa, wrote in a letter in July 1850, “My friends I have a little more to write [...] the 24 of July the mormans has a selabration I think the most people I ever saw.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> William G. Johnston, *Experiences of a Forty-Niner* (Pittsburgh, 1892), 180, 190. This account may have later encountered hyperbole, inasmuch as it was published in 1892.

<sup>37</sup> W. W. Call, “Recollections of Overland Journey to California, 1849,” July 24, 1859, pp. 9–11, Bancroft Library.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, John Litsey to his Friends, dated July 25, 1850, from Salt Lake City en route to California, California State Library.

Some emigrants from Illinois and Missouri, who attended Pioneer Day celebrations, while impressed by the splendor of the Mormon festivities, generally felt threatened by the way they were treated by their former neighbors. Henry Sterling Bloom of Joliet, Illinois, who attended the Pioneer Day celebration the same year Litsey did, described the festivities quite differently:

Wednesday evening 24 of July

I have just got into camp from the great Mormon celebration and it has been quite a site to me. the parade and pomp and pageantry was ahead of anything I ever saw in the States. I have seen and heard things that made the blood boil in my veins - the Mormon leaders openly defy the United States and call down Maledictions and curses upon her people her rulers and her government - they are very insulting to emigrants.

I will endeavor to give you a brief description of the performances of the day. It commenced with the firing of the cannon in the morning - and by ten o'clock A.M. the people had generally assembled when they formed in civic procession headed by the Marshals of the day - They had an immense carriage for the band of music drawn by 12 horses after marching about awhile they went to church to listen to an oration they formed in procession again as follows - the general of the legion and two or three of their principal leaders, then followed 24 young men with a flag at their head and this motto The Lion of the Lord - they were dressed with a blue coat and white pantalons and red Sash around their waist - then followed 24 young ladies dressed in white with a long blue silk scarf over the left shoulder and fastened on the right side their hair parted into two braids, bound round the forehead and wreathed with white flowers they carried a flag inscribed Hail to our Chief. then followed their bishops dressed in their flowing robes, some 22 of them - each bearing a flag with a different motto and device - a few I recollect - The Valley of Peace - Truth will prevail - Free dirt - Joseph the seer - The Star of Deseret - &C. - then followed their captains some forty or fifty dressed in uniform - then the citizens and the rabble - taken all together it was a great performance.<sup>39</sup>

At the same 1850 Pioneer Day celebration, Dan Carpenter of Clay County, Missouri recorded,

The Mormons this day celebrate the arrival of the first settlement of this valley 3 years ago by them. We are in a hearing of their cannons, by way of jollification. The whole valley comes to this city today and have a perfect jubilee. The music waggon for today is drawn by 14 horses, large and commodious. The Mormons curse the d- - d ragged Emigrant Sons of [B-----s] from Mo. & Ill. Traveling through their country."<sup>40</sup>

Another emigrant, Aylett R. Cotton, from Iowa provided this description of how Missourians did not linger in the city when they were reminded how the Saints felt towards them:

We arrived at Salt Lake in the early part of August [1849] and stopped nearby the settlements from Friday to Sunday. . . . There was a large circular canvass suspended in the form of a great tent under which the people had their meetings and in which Brigham

<sup>39</sup> Letter of Henry Sterling Bloom to his wife (in Illinois), written from Salt Lake City, July, 23-25, 1850.

<sup>40</sup> Journal of Dan Carpenter, July 24, 1850, LDS Church Archives. It is of interest to note that both Missouri and Illinois are mentioned here and that although the Nauvoo exile was more recent, the evidence compiled through my research has demonstrated a definitely more negative view toward the Missourians in general.



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Young preached the Sunday we were there. I was not feeling very well and did not attend the meeting. I was told that he said that there were people coming and skulking through that place on the way to California, who had taken part in driving them out of Missouri, and if he could catch them, he would send them to Hell Across Lots. There were some Missourians who became alarmed and started on as soon as possible.<sup>41</sup>

***Covered wagons recall the arrival of Mormon Pioneers in 1847.***

One Missourian who went to California the following year wrote, “I went north of Salt Lake City as the Mormons we [were] down on Missourians generally many Missouri trains got in trouble If their stock got in to the gardens or any fields they were fined heavily. It was charged that the mormons would turn the cattle in on purpose to make trouble I knew many emigrants that ware ruined and had to work their way to oregon or California.”<sup>42</sup>

However, hard feelings against the Missourians seemed to subside a bit in Salt Lake City by the close of 1850.<sup>43</sup> Two years later, in the spring of 1852, a Missouri act of compassion may have helped to atone for the memories of the actions taken by the mobs witnessed on the western Missouri border

<sup>41</sup> “Across the Plains to California in 1849 and After: An Autobiography,” Recollections of Aylett R. Cotton, 25, typescript, Bancroft Library.

<sup>42</sup> “To California in 1850,” Recollections of Issac Julian Harvey, 45–46. Bancroft Library.

<sup>43</sup> During the trail years (1848–1868), I did not find any more negative comments directed towards Missouri emigrants passing through Salt Lake City after 1850. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that such feelings occurred in Southern Utah when an overland company with citizens from Missouri was murdered at Mountain Meadows, September 9, 1857. Encountering these Missouri emigrants on the eve of the Utah War seems to have helped generate a war hysteria that rekindled harsh feelings toward former enemies. For more information on this topic see Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).



**Construction of the Salt Lake Tabernacle**

only did they raise money to bury the Mormon dead, but they also gathered funds to help the survivors continue their journey to Utah. The local townspeople also created an orphan fund, and some even adopted Mormon children who were orphaned.<sup>44</sup>

Abraham Smoot, an eye-witness to such compassion, may have softened the hearts of his fellow Saints in Salt Lake City, by writing, "I shall never forget the kindness of the citizens of Lexington in caring for the living and burying the dead. The Lord certainly inspired them to do all that sympathy and benevolence could suggest in aid of the afflicted."<sup>45</sup>

In addition to attending Pioneer Day festivities, some emigrants also attended Mormon church services, which they generally found similar to religious services they had encountered elsewhere. An early forty-niner, E. W. Brooks of Ohio, described attending an LDS service: "Sunday, July 15th [1849] Have been to Mormon Church today. The building is of poles covered with slates."<sup>46</sup> During this same time, George Jewett, of Knoxville, Iowa, wrote, "Our ears were so saluted this morning with the sound of the 'Church going bell' so after dipping 7 times in Jordan I repaired to the place of worship which was a large shed made by setting posts in the ground and covering the plank [...] There was a rude pulpit at one end occupied by the president, preacher & 12 apostles, from which Mormonism was held forth about 2000 people who seemed very attentive. Several speakers spoke."<sup>47</sup>

One emigrant passing through Salt Lake City the following year described the church fashions of the day as well as the details of the meeting.

We attended church at the tabernacle the first Sunday after we arrived in the valley. The huge building was filled with well dressed people. The ladies could almost guess the year

<sup>44</sup> William G. Hartley and Fred E. Woods, *Explosion of the Steamboat Saluda* (Salt Lake City: Millennial Press, 2002), 43–53.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Andrew Jenson, "Fifty-sixth Company – Kennebec," *The Contributor* 13 (July 1892):414.

<sup>46</sup> E. W. Brooks, *Journal of a Forty-Niner* (London, 1967), 48.

<sup>47</sup> Diary of George E. Jewett, 12, Bancroft Library.



each Saint had crossed the Plains by the fashion that existed at the time. Many of the saints of both sexes had expensive clothing, which was carefully reserved for special days. The members of the Buck Eye Camp occupied prominent seats. The choir was very large, contained a hundred singers. The elders sat in front of the choir. President Young was President. The first hymn reminded me of a Methodist church. The prayer differed but little from an ordinary prayer in our churches. The speaker who was a convert from the methodist church – so he said – took his text. For a time he expounded his text in the old style, and then launched off with abusing the Gentile world, using the severest language.... There was but one true religion, he claimed, and that was the one held by them. . . . The main portion of the audience were dressed in all sorts of fashions, from the Yankee to the English cut.<sup>48</sup>

Clara E. Downes during her visit in 1860 provides a wonderful image of church attendance:

We went & washed & dressed for church which was to open at one. They threw their parlors open to us & treated us kindly. The services were held in the bowery in front of the temple. There were about 1,000 present the people were dressed very plain [,] fashion there was none. Some had hoops & some were hoopless. The bonnets were of all fashions & materials. . . . 'twas a very ordinary looking congregation. There were 23 persons on the pulpit. . . . The meeting opened by singing which was by no means of the first order then prayer by Joseph Young which was almost inaudible to me 'twas communion day a long range of silver baskets & cups were ranged along before them at the command of Brigham the 12 apostles rose & broke the bread & six of them distributed it & returned & then the other six took the wine & went around as it took them some time to go all around, it was occupied by several of them.<sup>49</sup>

Some California-bound emigrants chose to stay for the winter season, and several even joined the LDS church.<sup>50</sup> The Second General Epistle from the First Presidency of the church declared at the close of 1849, “Many who came in search of gold, have heard the Gospel for the first time and will go no farther, having believed and been baptized.”<sup>51</sup>

One such convert was William Morley Black, who, at age twenty-two, caught gold fever to the degree that he resigned from being sheriff of Cuba, Illinois, and joined a joint stock company in the spring of 1849 and went west to get rich. He entered the Salt Lake Valley in July of that year two years after the vanguard Saints had first entered the Valley. There, to his surprise, he found a well-organized city. “At first I thought we had lost our reckoning and that this was the Sabbath day, but this could not be as the Mormons were an unchristian lawless sect and doubtless paid no heed to the Sabbath.” He further notes that he ate dinner with a friendly Mormon family and was influenced by the blessing on the food. “This was the first

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, *From Lake Erie to the Pacific – An Overland Trip in 1850–51. Life on the Great Plains. A Few Weeks Among the Saints* (np., 1876), 24, 2, Bancroft Library.

<sup>49</sup> Clara E. Downes, “Journal Across the Plains,” July 8, 1860, 73–74, Bancroft Library.

<sup>50</sup> An excellent monograph that provides more detail on this topic is Brigham D. Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners in Great Salt Lake City 1849 and 1850* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983). See also Madsen’s unpublished article, “Social Relations between the Mormons and the 49er’s,” paper presented at the Salt Lake Community College, April 14, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> *Frontier Guardian* [Kanesville, Iowa] 1:24 (December 26, 1849). Microfilm copy at Brigham Young University Library.

time in my life that I had heard a blessing asked on a daily food and this prayer fell from the lips of an uncultured Mormon.” Shortly thereafter, at the conclusion of his first day in Salt Lake City, he relates the following:

Toward evening I met another Mormon, a Mr. William Wordsworth... To my surprise Mr. Wordsworth invited us to attend their church services the next day. I accepted the invitation and he promised to call for me.

Sunday, July 25, 1849 is the day ever to be remembered by me. Mr. Wordsworth called early and after chatting ten or fifteen minutes with members of our company and again extending an invitation to us all to attend their church, he and I walked to the bowery. We secured seats near the front of the congregation. On the west was a raised platform of lumber on which were seated some twenty of their leading Elders, including Brigham Young. Under the shade of the bowery seated on neatly-made slab benches were the choir and congregation. Services opened with singing and prayer, and the sacrament (bread and water) of the Lord’s supper was blessed and passed to all the people. Then a man of noble, princely bearing addressed the meeting. As he arose Mr. Wordsworth said, “That is Apostle John Taylor, one of the two men who were with our Prophet and Patriarch when they were martyred in Carthage jail.” The word “Apostle” thrilled me, and the sermon, powerful, and testimony that followed filled my soul with a joy and satisfaction that I never felt before, and I said to Mr. W., “If that is Mormonism than I am a Mormon. How can I become a member of your church?”

“By baptism,” he answered.

“I am ready for the ordinance.”

He replied “Do not be in a hurry. Stay here and get acquainted with our people. Study more fully the principles of the gospel. Then if you wish cast your lot with us it will be a pleasure to me to baptize you.” That night I slept but little, I was too happy to sleep. A revelation had come to me and its light filled my soul. My desire for gold was swept away. I had found the Pearl of Great Price, and I resolved to purchase it, let it cost what it would.

After a few days rest the company pushed on for California, but another man drove my team. I gave them my all, and in exchange received Baptism. . . . I had lost the world and become a “Mormon.”<sup>52</sup>

The luster of the city impressed other emigrants. William Morley Black had felt a spiritual power that transformed his life and caused him to never want to leave the influence of the Saints.

Notwithstanding the negative image of the Saints penned in newspapers and in sensational novels and periodicals, the accounts of overland migrants heading west generally present a positive picture of a capable Brigham Young and an industrious people who had built an impressive city and had made the desert “blossom like a rose.” Although there is evidence of harsh feelings among some Missouri migrants, and some passing emigrants complained of high prices and the unacceptable practice of polygamy, a voice is heard throughout the emigrant accounts which whispers, “Surely this city . . . [did] shine.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Autobiography of William Morley Black, courtesy of L. Brent and Mareid Black Horton. Mareid is a great-granddaughter of William Morley Black. Copy in possession of author. For more information on emigrants who joined the Mormon church, see Fred E. Woods “More Precious Than Gold: The Journey to and through Zion in 1849-50,” *Nauvoo Journal* 11 (Spring 1999): 119-20.

<sup>53</sup> That it continues to shine is evidenced by the wonderful reports, which the city of Salt Lake City received internationally when it hosted the 2002 Winter Olympic Games.

# “The Boss of the White Slaves”: R. Bruce Johnson and African American Political Power in Utah at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

BY JEFFREY NICHOLS



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In 1903, the *Salt Lake Herald* called Robert Bruce Johnson, a black man, “the boss of the white slaves.”<sup>1</sup> The reporter did not mean to accuse him of inveigling white women into prostitution, the usual contemporary definition of the word, but referred rather to Johnson's power to deliver votes for the Republican Party. Bruce Johnson certainly aspired to political office and influence throughout his life, but his success was limited, as his aspirations were frustrated by institutionalized racism and his own career choices and circle of acquaintances. The *Herald* campaign against him ironically illuminates his experience. The newspaper credited Johnson, a saloonkeeper and holder of minor offices, with exercising genuine political leadership, leadership that was widely acknowledged by other politicians but that Johnson was never able to translate into a major Salt Lake City public office. Johnson's struggles also exemplify the changing urban political climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as so-called progressive reformers worked against traditional machine politics and saloon politicians like Johnson. This article will analyze the constricted reality of political participation for a black man in Salt Lake City around the turn of the twentieth century.

The sources for Bruce Johnson's life are few and scattered, especially for his early years. But the outlines of his story can be traced and placed within the context **Robert Bruce Johnson**

Jeffrey Nichols is associate professor of history at Westminster College in Salt Lake City.

<sup>1</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, October 26, 1903.

of larger events. Johnson was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, about 1850, perhaps as a slave.<sup>2</sup> As a young man he left home for Indiana then joined the massive exodus of blacks to large southern cities and New Orleans. There he met and married a white woman named Christina Crowe in 1875 whose family had emigrated from Alsace, France, when she was a child.<sup>3</sup> Mixed-race marriages were legal in Louisiana at the time, although such a union must have required a great deal of courage in the face of white hostility.<sup>4</sup>

Like so many other struggling African Americans, Johnson worked at a variety of occupations, including barbering, and eventually settled into the trade he would follow for much of the rest of his life, saloonkeeper.<sup>5</sup> Johnson became an avid supporter of the Republicans just as the majority black Louisiana party began to lose its tenuous grip on state power to the majority white Democrats. Nevertheless, he benefited from Reconstruction-era political opportunities. He claimed to have served on the New Orleans police force in the mid-1870s. Even after "Redemption" (the successful resumption of political power in the South by Democrats in 1877), Johnson may have been one of the few black customs inspectors and a janitor in the U.S. Mint, the kind of small-scale patronage plums that officials handed out to their political supporters.<sup>6</sup> Johnson was also active in black social organizations and served as Grand Pursuivant of the main Masonic lodge in the city.<sup>7</sup>

Like thousands of other African Americans, however, the Johnsons left the deep South for the West. By October 1890, they were living in Salt Lake City, which he may have visited on a tour of western cities in 1881.<sup>8</sup> The couple may have left New Orleans to escape the Redeemers' backlash against African Americans, especially active Republicans. The Johnsons

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Census ms., 1900, Salt Lake City, Supervisor's District No. 273, Ward 1, ED 7, sheet no. 4; *Salt Lake City Headlight*, November 18, 1899. The *Headlight* (Salt Lake City) was a black-owned and edited newspaper published in the late 1890s.

<sup>3</sup> For marriage, see Marriage License, R. Bruce Johnson and Christina S. Crowe, December 11, 1875, in Parish of Orleans Marriage Records, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. For the migration from rural to urban areas, see Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 14, 126.

<sup>4</sup> William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 214-15.

<sup>5</sup> For Johnson as barber, see *Soards' New Orleans Directory, 1877-1883, 1885, 1889*; as saloonkeeper, see *Soards' Directory, 1886-1889*.

<sup>6</sup> On "Redemption," see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 512-601. For Johnson as police officer, see *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, October 9, 1891, and April 18, 1897. "Robert Johnson" is listed as a police officer in *Soards' Directory, 1876 and 1877*. For Johnson as customs inspector, see *Soards' Directory, 1881 and New Orleans Weekly Louisianan*, March 20, 1880. For Johnson as "cleaner," see *Soards' Directory, 1884; Weekly Louisianan*, February 11, March 11, 1882. On patronage jobs in Louisiana, see Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 149-50, 165-66. Julius Taylor, a black newspaper editor in Salt Lake City, claimed that Johnson also served as a municipal judge; see *Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City), January 18, 1896.

<sup>7</sup> *Weekly Louisianan*, March 12, 1881.

<sup>8</sup> For the trip, see *Weekly Louisianan*, July 2, 1881. For Johnson in Salt Lake City, see *Headlight*, November 18, 1899.

weathered the violence of the Klan, White Leaguers, and other groups and the collapse of the Republican Party in Louisiana after 1877, but something impelled them to finally leave. While miscegenation was not outlawed until 1894, a flood of discriminatory legislation had already begun to establish the de jure Jim Crow regime. Louisiana segregated railroads beginning in 1890 and strengthened its anti-enticement and contract enforcement laws that same year. *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the notorious Supreme Court decision that established the legality of “separate but equal” facilities for the races, followed in 1896.<sup>9</sup> New Orleans was becoming a difficult and dangerous place for a black man in politics.

Johnson left one tumultuous scene in Louisiana and arrived in another, very different one in Utah. Just a few weeks before, Wilford Woodruff, the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had issued his “Manifesto” in September 1890 advising the Saints to “refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.”<sup>10</sup> The LDS church thus officially abandoned plural marriage after a long struggle. The decision on polygamy and promises by the LDS leadership not to interfere in politics finally put the territory on the road to statehood. This set off a complex political scramble as some citizens remained within the local parties, which had contested for power since the 1870s, while others eventually formed local branches of the two major parties, the Populists, and various socialist parties.<sup>11</sup>

Salt Lake City had always been a difficult place for an aspiring non-Mormon in any pursuit, and an ambitious African American faced a doubly daunting task. White Utahns generally shared the contemporary racial attitudes of other northerners. However, Utah was the only western territory to explicitly legalize slavery, although relatively few slaves were ever held there. Mormons often spoke of the “curse of Ham” or “mark of Cain” that supposedly marked Africans for permanent inferiority. The LDS church denied the priesthood and thus, full membership to African Americans until 1978. The church also drew the majority of its early converts from north-eastern states, Great Britain and Scandinavia, where few blacks lived.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> On African Americans leaving the South, see Carole Marks, *Farewell - We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 50-74; on legislation, see Cohen, 214-15, 218-19, 240-41. On violence and the decline of the Republican Party, see Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 183-218; Tunnell, *passim*. On Plessy, see Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1987), 164.

<sup>10</sup> The Manifesto was published September 25, 1890; it appears in the *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1981), 291-93.

<sup>11</sup> See “A Tumultuous Interim to Statehood,” chap. in Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 255-90; “The 1890s and the Challenge to The Mormon World View,” chap. in Thomas G. Alexander *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 3-15.

<sup>12</sup> The status of slavery in Utah was complicated by the Indian slave trade that Mormon settlers found flourishing in the region. See Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 71-74; Newell G.



The Johnsons found only about 218 blacks in a total Salt Lake City population of about 45,000 in 1890.<sup>13</sup> Many Mormons and others treated blacks with casual racism and sometimes worse. Newspapers published jokes and cartoons that seem shockingly racist by twenty-first century standards, and blackface minstrelsy was popular.<sup>14</sup> White businessmen often refused to serve African Americans, and they were restricted to theater balconies.<sup>15</sup> The territorial legislature earlier in 1888 outlawed miscegenation and there have been at least three African Americans lynched in Utah.<sup>16</sup>

Most blacks who did live in Salt Lake City settled in a small working-class area adjacent to the tiny Chinatown and the vice district (parts of the blocks bounded by Main Street and 200 West, and 100 South and 300 South). Residential segregation became stricter in the early twentieth century. The 1910 census shows that Franklin Avenue, a narrow downtown street, had an almost 100 percent black population; one newspaper referred to the street as "Darktown."<sup>17</sup>

Despite these institutional and cultural barriers to full participation by blacks, the chaotic and exciting 1890s offered some openings for a politician on the make. The city's population had become roughly half non-Mormon, and LDS church officials could no longer easily monopolize politics. Mormon and non-Mormon businessmen, bankers, and attorneys could now contend for office in the first truly competitive campaigns between the Mormon "People's" and the non-Mormon "Liberal" party. Liberals like O. W. Powers, a nominal Democrat, introduced popular tactics like torchlight parades and mass rallies to the quiet Utah political scene where church-approved candidates had become used to drawing 90 percent or more of the vote.<sup>18</sup> Non-Mormon miners, railroad workers, and others

Bringham, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1981), 3-14, 98, 129; Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," in *Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church*, ed. Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Armand L. Mauss (Midvale: Signature Books, 1984), 53-129; Jessie L. Embry, "The LDS Church and African Americans," chap. in *Black Saints in a White Church: Contemporary African American Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 15-35; and Newell G. Bringham, "The 'Missouri Thesis' Revisited: Early Mormonism, Slavery, and the Status of Black People," in *Black and Mormon*, ed. Newell G. Bringham and Darron T. Smith (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 28-29.

<sup>13</sup> Table II, "Composition and Characteristics of the Population for Cities of 25,000 or More," *Thirteenth Census of the United States: Abstract of the Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 592.

<sup>14</sup> For jokes and cartoons, see, for example, *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 28, 1898. For minstrelsy, see *Deseret Evening News*, November 7, 1895; and Michael Hicks, "Ministering Minstrels: Blackface Entertainment in Pioneer Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58 (Winter 1990): 49-62.

<sup>15</sup> *Broad Ax*, October 23, 1897, June 18, 1898.

<sup>16</sup> On miscegenation, see "An Act Regulating Marriage" in *The Compiled Laws of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Herbert Pembroke, 1888), 92; on lynchings, see Larry R. Gerlach, "Justice Denied: The Lynching of Robert Marshall," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 66 (Fall 1998): 356; and *Blazing Crosses In Zion: The Ku Klux Klan in Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> U. S. Census ms., 1910, Salt Lake County, ED 144, sheets 8 A B; *Salt Lake Herald*, April 9, 1901. For the vice district and Chinatown, see Jeffrey Nichols, *Prostitution, Polygamy, and Power: Salt Lake City, 1847-1918* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2002), 45-49.

responded with their votes. Horrified Mormons watched political control of their capital city slip away and identified those new voters as prostitutes, their customers, saloonkeepers, drinkers, gamblers, and criminals.<sup>19</sup> A talented speaker and organizer with a public forum like a saloon could play a role in this new political world.

The Johnsons settled amongst the city's small, largely segregated, but politically active black population. Despite their small numbers, African Americans published at least six "Race newspapers" in the 1890s and early 1900s and campaigned and voted for candidates, almost but not quite always Republicans.<sup>20</sup> Like the white-published dailies, these papers were highly partisan and played leading roles in the political ferment of the 1890s. The *Salt Lake Daily Tribune* was Liberal, then Republican. The official church organ, the *Deseret Evening News*, promoted the People's Party, then tended to support Democratic positions, although by the late 1890s more Mormons were moving to the Republicans. The *Herald*, which had mixed Mormon and non-Mormon ownership, was usually Democratic. The papers' political coverage is colorful and entertaining and must be used cautiously. In these partisan sheets, their own parties' events are always mass meetings with big, enthusiastic crowds, sure of overwhelming victory at the polls; their opponents' rallies are small, poorly attended and disorganized, their positions weak and contradictory, and their supporters misguided and demoralized.

Bruce Johnson plunged into this scene with enthusiasm and self-assurance, despite his handicaps of race, relative poverty, and newcomer status. One extant photograph of Johnson at about age fifty shows a stout, thick-chested man with a mustache in a sober suit.<sup>21</sup> Would-be political activists were just beginning to consider disbanding the People's and the Liberal parties in favor of the national groupings.<sup>22</sup> Johnson aligned himself with the Liberals, who the African American editor of the *Headlight* newspaper, J. Gordon McPherson, called "the party of progress and reform."<sup>23</sup> Most Liberals were Republicans in their national politics, not least because the Republicans were far more aggressive supporters of anti-polygamy legislation than the states' rights Democrats. Liberals called

<sup>18</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune* January 1 and July 27, 1890; *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 3, 1914. See also Velt G. Erickson, "The Liberal Party of Utah" (MA thesis, University of Utah, 1948), passim., esp. 29; Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984) 99-100.

<sup>19</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, July 21, 1889.

<sup>20</sup> "The Growth and Emergence of Utah's Black Community, 1870-1910," chapter in Ronald Gerald Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825-1910" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1980), 74-110. On "Race newspapers," see Douglas Flammig, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005), 26-30. Utah's "race newspapers" included the *Democratic Headlight*, *Tri City Oracle*, *Utah Plain Dealer*, and the *Broad Ax*.

<sup>21</sup> *Headlight*, November 18, 1899.

<sup>22</sup> Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 156-59.

<sup>23</sup> For Johnson as Liberal, see *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 19, 1893; *Headlight*, November 18, 1899.

for government action, including much-needed physical improvements like street and sidewalk paving and a modern sewer system that elected officials had put off for decades.<sup>24</sup> The Liberals won political control of Salt Lake City only nine months before Bruce Johnson's arrival. The Liberals needed every vote they could muster in 1890, and their candidate, George M. Scott, narrowly won the mayoral race with the help of mass disfranchisement of Mormons under the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act and the "colonization" of non-Mormon voters. Sometime in late 1890 or early 1891, Mayor Scott named Bruce Johnson a city policeman, evidently the first time an African American served on that force.<sup>25</sup> The Liberals were presumably rewarding the city's tiny black electorate for its support while taking advantage of Johnson's previous police experience. They may also have counted on his skin color to make him a more valuable agent in the investigation and social control of those that the city's elite deemed less desirable: minorities and immigrants.<sup>26</sup>

Johnson was an effective officer and the newspapers credited him with the arrest of a number of petty criminals. In April 1892, he broke up a "gang" of "Seattle flim-flim artists," prostitutes who were allegedly trying to entrap a prominent local official.<sup>27</sup> Just two months later, however, Johnson lost his job when he was accused of renting rooms to other prostitutes in a house he controlled. Johnson protested that his relationship with these women was legitimate:

Those women have rendered important service to the officers of this city on a number of occasions, and there is more than one man doing time in the Penitentiary who would perhaps not be there if these women hadn't told the officers certain facts . . . while on the lay for crooks I have often been seen going into their place, and malicious people have used it against me . . .<sup>28</sup>

It is worth noting that on the few occasions when Salt Lake City newspapers wrote about black persons, they nearly always took note of skin color and often rendered dialogue in minstrel-show slang. I could find no place in this story, however, where Johnson's race was mentioned, and his

<sup>24</sup> David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998), 353-59.

<sup>25</sup> For the election, see Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, The Right Place: The Official Centennial History* rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1996), 198-99; Alexander and Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles*, 99-100. Paul C. Howell has traditionally been identified as the first black policeman but I have found no evidence that Howell served until he replaced Johnson on the force in 1892. For Howell, see Kate B. Carter, *The Story of the Negro Pioneer* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1965), 55; and the unpublished memoir of Howell's daughter, Byrdie Lee Langon, "Utah and the Early Black Settlers," Ms. A 2002, Utah State Historical Society.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Lester Gleason, "The Salt Lake City Police Department, 1851-1949: A Social History" (M.S. thesis, University of Utah, 1950), 19-33; Eric H. Monkonn, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, April 19, 1892; *Salt Lake Tribune* April 19, 1892. See also Salt Lake City Police Department, "Miscellaneous Offenses, 1891-1893," Ledger book, Utah State Archives, 227, 289, 331, 336.

<sup>28</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 19, 1892. For details of the accusations, see *Salt Lake Herald* June 18, 1892; *Deseret Evening News*, June 18 and 20, 1892.

own words were quoted in standard English—both perhaps marks of respect for his abilities.

Johnson's alibi was a common one for policemen who found themselves accused of similar misbehavior, and sometimes it worked. Unfortunately for him, however, someone wrote the *Deseret News* that he had heard Johnson brag that he owned the furniture in the brothel. The police force was also embroiled in another scandal and faced a public outcry against the increased numbers of gambling dens, brothels, and saloons under the new, non-Mormon government.<sup>29</sup> The Liberal mayor, Robert N. Baskin, as a result, cleaned house in the police department. Baskin fired Johnson and replaced him with another black man and active Republican, Paul C. Howell, establishing a tradition of a single black patrolman.<sup>30</sup> Newspaper reports give an inkling of racial attitudes of the era: the *Deseret News* called Howell "a darkey of mastodon proportions."<sup>31</sup>

This kind of shuffling was common, especially with changes in city administration, and did not necessarily damage a man's chances for other offices or a return to the force. In Bruce Johnson's case, by the next summer he had joined up with the newly organized Utah Republican Party, and a Republican named him deputy city recorder with the special responsibility of dog tax collector, a position that involved licensing animals and destroying the unlicensed. The *Salt Lake Tribune* claimed that his appointment "is looked upon by the colored colony as a direct compliment to themselves, and a recognition of their rights in the bestowal of political favors. Mr. Johnson has heretofore filled an official position, that of city detective, with signal ability, . . ."<sup>32</sup> While the job may sound trivial and was often the source of snide commentary, it could be quite lucrative. The collector was entitled to keep one-half the license fee plus a small fee for destroying unlicensed dogs. A man could reportedly earn up to two thousand dollars a year, a considerable sum when veteran policemen were only earning twelve hundred dollars annually.<sup>33</sup> That position also became a token one for African Americans. Johnson was removed from the post when a new city administration came to power and replaced him with a black political rival, William W. Taylor, publisher of the *Utah Plain Dealer*, the same job was later held briefly by J. Gordon McPherson.<sup>34</sup>

Salt Lake's black activists sometimes quarreled over these political plums. W. W. Taylor and Johnson clashed over the successor to Paul Howell when

<sup>29</sup> The letter from "A. Copp" appears in *Deseret Evening News*, June 20, 1892. For other complaints, see "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," December 30, 1890, September 1, 1891, July 5, 1892. The original minute books are housed at the Salt Lake City Recorder's Office; microfilm copies are available at the Family History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

<sup>30</sup> "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," June 21, 1892; *Salt Lake Herald*, January 20, 1894.

<sup>31</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, June 22, 1892.

<sup>32</sup> "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," August 1 and 11, 1893; *Salt Lake Tribune* August 3, 1893.

<sup>33</sup> "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," April 1, 1890; October 20, 1893.

<sup>34</sup> For W. W. Taylor, see "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," January 9, 1894; for McPherson, see Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah," 98.

Howell was dismissed from the force in early 1894. Taylor and Johnson were both members of the Afro-American Citizens' League (Taylor was president), but Johnson led a dissident faction that objected to Howell's firing and his replacement by William De Young, another black man. The *Herald*, already no fan of Bruce Johnson's, argued that the "solid and sensible men" of the League supported De Young, while "the Bruce Johnson crowd"—by which the *Herald* evidently meant Johnson's saloon customers—opposed him. In the event, the League closed ranks behind De Young and he was appointed.<sup>35</sup>

The Afro-American Citizens' League exemplifies the activism, growth, and sometimes divisions in the black community in the mid-1890s. Besides publishing newspapers, black men and women founded churches and created a variety of social clubs like Masonic lodges, Odd Fellows' chapters, and literary societies. The community celebrated Emancipation Day each year, with Bruce Johnson presiding over the 1895 festivities.<sup>36</sup> The city's black population more than tripled and its institutions were strengthened when the U. S. Army's all-black Twenty-fourth Infantry was stationed at Fort Douglas in 1896. Among the approximately 475 members of the unit was Chaplain Allen Allensworth, who quickly established himself as a leader within the black community, and J. Gordon McPherson, who left the army after serving in the Spanish-American War to return to Salt Lake City and start a Republican newspaper in 1899.<sup>37</sup> McPherson co-founded and Johnson served as the first president of the Americus Social Club, dedicated to "promoting the intellectual, social and moral well-being of its members." The club, capitalized at two thousand dollars in five dollar shares, met above Johnson's saloon at 43 Commercial Street; it was probably based on the Americus Club in New Orleans to which he had belonged.<sup>38</sup>

Although he had rivals, Bruce Johnson was generally considered the leading black politician in Salt Lake City. In late 1893, as one of the leaders of the Afro-American Republican Club, he shared platforms with white speakers and spoke on Republican principles and candidates to all-black and mixed-race meetings of voters.<sup>39</sup> Julius Taylor (no relation to William), a rare black Democrat, claimed that Johnson bragged that he "carr[ied] the

<sup>35</sup> "Salt Lake City Council Minutes," January 16 and 23, 1894; *Salt Lake Herald*, January 20, 21, and 24, 1894; *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 20 and 24, 1894.

<sup>36</sup> *Broad Ax*, September 28, 1895; Langon, "Utah and the Early Black Settlers," 29-30. On churches and clubs, see *Headlight*, November 18, 1899; Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah," 86-101, 138, 159; and France Davis, *Light in the Midst of Zion: A History of Black Baptists in Utah, 1892-1996* (Salt Lake City: University Publishing, 1997), 12-20.

<sup>37</sup> Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah," 78, 95, 98, 144, 163; *Broad Ax*, January 9 and September 25, 1897.

<sup>38</sup> For the founding of the club, see *Salt Lake Herald*, December 17, 1899, *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 17, 1899; for its location, see "Fire Insurance Map of Salt Lake City, 1898," sheet 103, (New York: Sanborn Perris Map Company, 1898); for the Americus Club in New Orleans, see *Weekly Louisianan*, September 17, 1881.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see *Salt Lake Herald*, December 18, 1893.



colored vote of Salt Lake in his vest pocket.” Just how many votes this comprised is uncertain, but in 1896, W. W. Taylor promised “that he would deliver the solid colored vote of 760 to the Republican party.”<sup>40</sup>

Johnson combined his political passion with his livelihood by operating a series of saloons and renting rooms on Commercial Street, the vibrant, noisy heart of Salt Lake City’s vice district. Like saloonkeepers across the nation, white, black, or otherwise, Johnson became well-known among a wide circle of working-class acquaintances, and his saloons—which probably served all-black or mostly black clientele—became important centers of politics in the Fifth (municipal) Ward. Customers discussed candidates and platforms in Johnson’s bars; most importantly, Johnson made sure voters registered and delivered them to the polls on election day.<sup>41</sup> In 1895, Johnson helped form an all-black Abraham Lincoln Republican Club, which sometimes met at the African Methodist Episcopal Church and sometimes in a boarding house on Commercial Street.<sup>42</sup> Like many white Utah Republicans, the Lincoln Club endorsed William McKinley for president but also came out for the coinage of silver. The Club also defended the civil rights of its members and denounced public businesses that discriminated.<sup>43</sup> The Club proposed Bruce Johnson as a candidate for the state legislature, but the white-dominated Republican Party refused to nominate him. A year later, Johnson’s rival William W. Taylor did win nomination. The *Salt Lake Herald* subjected William to a blistering series of editorials and cartoons, rendering his speech in highly racist language and mocking his service as dogcatcher. William lost the election despite receiving more than sixty-five hundred votes. Julius Taylor, who hated William and the Republican Party, claimed that William lost because he was “one of the sons of Ham.”<sup>44</sup>

Julius Taylor, editor of the *Broad Ax*, ridiculed blacks for continuing to support the party of Lincoln when it did so little for them: “There is no logical reason why a colored man should be a Republican, any more than he should be a Mormon, a Methodist, or a Baptist.”<sup>45</sup> Julius frequently used Bruce Johnson’s political frustrations with what Taylor liked to call the “grand old lilly-white party” to make his points:

<sup>40</sup> For “vest pocket,” see *Broad Ax*, October 19, and November 12, 1898; for 760 votes, see *Salt Lake Herald*, October 23, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> On saloon politics, see Madelon Powers, *Faces Along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman’s Saloon, 1870-1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 63-65, 69, 107-111, 168; “Saloon Politics,” chap. in Thomas J. Noel, *The City and the Saloon: Denver, 1858-1916* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 33-47.

<sup>42</sup> *Broad Ax*, October 5, 1895; *Salt Lake Herald*, September 17, 1896; and *Salt Lake Tribune* September 17, 1896.

<sup>43</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 17, 1896.

<sup>44</sup> For nomination of Johnson, see *Broad Ax*, August 31, 1895. For W. W. Taylor’s candidacy, see *Salt Lake Herald*, October 4, 9, 13, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, and 31, 1896; Coleman, “A History of Blacks in Utah,” 100. For “sons of Ham,” see *Broad Ax*, November 14, 1896.

<sup>45</sup> *Broad Ax*, August 31, 1895. (Taylor was a Unitarian.)



**W. W. Taylor according to the Salt Lake Herald.**

[the state senate]; but it is needless to add that he did not receive the nomination.”<sup>48</sup> Julius Taylor offered no such respect to William

Taylor and constructed an elaborate hierarchy of Republican corruption during William’s 1896 campaign:

Judge R. B. Johnson owns and controls the little contemptible whelp, and [U.S.] Senator [from Utah, Arthur] Brown has a mortgage on Judge Johnson; and Bill McKinley and his bill owns Senator Brown; and Mark Hanna holds a perpetual chattel mortgage on the Buckeye Napoleon, and the hook-nosed British money-loaners own Mark Hanna and all of that miserable crowd of ungodly men own and controls the empty-headed, chicken-hearted would-be legislator.<sup>49</sup>

Bruce Johnson did not need Julius Taylor’s partisan sniping to understand that the Republicans offered him less than he deserved. He sought election as a delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1895, but was instead

Oh yes, the Republicans are great friends of the colored man. Bruce Johnson can affirm this, as shown by his race for legislature honors. Bruce has been a faithful hewer of wood and drawer of water in the G. O. P., but when it comes to climbing up the ladder of fame, he is called down. The colored man is good enough for a ‘vote catcher,’ but when it comes to catching an office he is overlooked.<sup>46</sup>

Julius Taylor found the Democrats no more receptive to his own aspirations: in 1896, he hoped for appointment as the legislature’s sergeant-at-arms but was denied the post.<sup>47</sup>

Despite Julius Taylor’s staunch Democratic politics, he sometimes expressed grudging respect for Bruce Johnson’s talents. In 1896 Taylor wrote, “Judge Johnson is eminently qualified to preside over

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Coleman, “A History of Blacks in Utah,” 98–99.

<sup>48</sup> *Broad Ax*, January 18, 1896.

<sup>49</sup> *Broad Ax*, October 17, 1896.

nominated and elected watchman and janitor, a menial position that whites considered appropriate for one of his color.<sup>50</sup> Although Johnson must have been disappointed by this lower position, by 1899 he was telling J. Gordon McPherson that he had indeed served as the only black delegate to the convention.<sup>51</sup>

Bruce Johnson's saloons kept him in contact with many voters, but hurt his own chances for office. His clientele and neighbors often included gamblers, prostitutes, and others considered unsavory by the respectable. As a prominent citizen of the demimonde, he sometimes helped to bail out women arrested for prostitution and men arrested for various crimes.<sup>52</sup> Johnson or his wife Christine may have been close to one of Salt Lake City's best known madams, Ada Wilson, whose brothel at 33 Commercial Street was a few doors north of Johnson's saloon. Ada Wilson adopted "Mary," the newborn child of one of her women, in early 1899.<sup>53</sup> The next year's federal census counted "Marie Wilson," a one-year-old white female, living with Bruce and Christine Johnson at their home.<sup>54</sup>

Johnson's saloon connections repeatedly got him into scrapes that gave ammunition to his rivals and those who styled themselves "reformers." He was involved in at least two fights, and was once fined twenty-five dollars for allowing women in his saloon after 9:00 p.m.<sup>55</sup> In 1897, he was accused of drugging and abducting a "Creole woman" to work in a brothel.<sup>56</sup> In late 1902, two black prostitutes murdered a miner named Ryan. The *Salt Lake Herald* at first credited Johnson with helping to solve the crime, but later accused him of pulling strings within the city administration to protect the murderers.<sup>57</sup> Johnson was sometimes lucky, sometimes good, and probably sometimes innocent: he won most of the fights he was involved in, avoided serious injury, and was never convicted of a serious crime. But in the eyes of "respectable" voters, especially white ones, Bruce Johnson was firmly established as a "sport"—a disreputable Negro dive-keeper.

White Republicans continued to respect Johnson's ability to deliver black votes, however. In the 1901 municipal campaign, when Johnson was president of the McKinley Republican club, candidates for mayor and city

<sup>50</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 7, 1895; and *Official Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention Assembled at Salt Lake City on the Fourth Day of March, 1895, to adopt a Constitution for the State of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Star Printing Company, 1898), 49.

<sup>51</sup> *Headlight*, November 18, 1899.

<sup>52</sup> "Fire Insurance Map of Salt Lake City, 1898," sheet 103, (New York: Sanborn Perris Map Company, 1898). For prostitutes, see *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 31, 1899; *Salt Lake Herald*, January 31, 1899; for male criminals, see *Salt Lake Herald*, October 26, 1903.

<sup>53</sup> "Petition of Ida Wilson for adoption," Salt Lake County Probate Court, Salt Lake County Estate Registers, Ledger book, Utah State Archives, Series 3927, Book F, no. 2884, p. 406; *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 9, 1899.

<sup>54</sup> U. S. Census ms., 1900, Salt Lake City, Supervisor's District No. 273, Ward 1, ED 7, sheet no. 4.

<sup>55</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, September 22, 1895; *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 6, 1896, and September 22, 1899.

<sup>56</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 18, 1897.

<sup>57</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, December 21, 1902, and January 6, 1903.



council and the party chairman made sure to attend the club's rally and ball.<sup>58</sup> The accusations against Johnson in the Ryan murder were only a warm up for the fall 1903 municipal elections, which featured a Republican candidate named Frank Knox. Johnson was a delegate to the convention that chose Knox, and he played the typical role of a ward politician, delivering speeches and rounding up voters. The *Herald* portrayed Johnson as the political boss of the fifty-first and fifty-second electoral districts who helped engineer the nomination of Knox for mayor, and referred often to the "Knox-Bruce Johnson" ticket. The *Herald's* skillful political cartoonist, Alan L. Lovey, drew Johnson several times as the leader of a parade of "white slaves" and poked fun at the Republican ticket's motto, "Progress, Paving, and Purity."<sup>59</sup> The newspaper hammered at Johnson for weeks, and someone composed several comic songs and poems.

See the man who is in charge of the machine!  
 See the curling of his hair, his dusky mien—  
 No compound ever made will remove that ebon shade.  
 For he's furnished with a color that won't fade.  
 He's the boss! Does it sting?  
 Isn't he the newest thing?<sup>60</sup>

Johnson supposedly enjoyed the attention, telling supporters, "Keep it up. Have all the fun you like, I have seen nothing in the *Herald* that I could

<sup>58</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 30, 31, November 1, 2, 1901.

<sup>59</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, October 21, 1903.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, October 26, 1903.



take exception to. I've been in politics a long time and I'll go right on living here in Salt Lake after this campaign."<sup>61</sup>

**R. Bruce Johnson and some "white slaves."**

The newspaper sometimes went beyond accusations of corruption to make crude racial remarks. The *Herald* reported that an anonymous "white slave" begged Knox: "For God's sake, quit . . . If we should win, that nigger would be wanting to run for governor."<sup>62</sup> Another voter allegedly told the *Herald*, "well, I may be a colored man and a pretty black one at that, but that nigger can't control my vote. He threatened to have me run out of town if I didn't vote his way, but I'm still here and if he tries to monkey with me there'll be trouble. And say, there are a lot more colored people just like me in this town, too."<sup>63</sup> A number of white Utah Republicans agreed with the *Herald's* charges. One denounced the "machine" for introducing the "vicious methods as Plum alley and Commercial street."<sup>64</sup> Among those alleged methods was the colonization of unemployed Butte copper miners as Salt Lake City voters.<sup>65</sup> The *Herald* claimed that in the case of a Knox victory, Johnson hoped to run for Congress in 1904, since "governor is not good enough for me."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., October 23, 1903.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., October 26, 1903.

<sup>64</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, October 23, 1903.

<sup>65</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, October 25, 1903.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., October 31, 1903.





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The Republican *Tribune* attempted to counter the attacks on Johnson with similar charges against Martin E. Mulvey, a white Commercial Street saloonkeeper who was running for the city council as a Democrat. In the process, the *Tribune* tacitly acknowledged the *Herald's* accusations.

**R. Bruce Johnson retaliates  
against white Republicans, 1903.**

But the Republican party does not make any point on Bruce Johnson; it doesn't [sic] nominate him for office; it doesn't defend anything he had done, if he has done wrong. It does not make itself in any way responsible for him.

On the other hand, the Democratic party takes up M. E. Mulvey, make him its candidate for the important office of Councilman for four years; makes itself accountable for his ugly surroundings and record, and panders to the depraved vote from which he draws his strength, by making him a candidate.

It is a candidacy which all the decent people of the Fifth Municipal ward should repudiate with loathing and scorn, and which should forever shut the mouths of Democrats from [sic] uttering any reproaches against anybody on the score of morality and decency and which should sink their whole ticket to the depths of oblivion on election day.<sup>67</sup>

The *Herald's* reporters and editor were clearly seeking to stir up readers' prejudices for political benefit. In the process, they credited Bruce Johnson with greater political power than he ever possessed in reality. The real power in Republican politics was Thomas Kearns, a silver millionaire, U. S. Senator, and owner of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Kearns had turned against the LDS church leadership when they declined to support him for reelection, and he came in for his share of *Herald* abuse as well. But a black saloon-

<sup>67</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 31, 1903.

keeper with prostitutes for friends offered the Democrats an easier target and a wider rhetorical palette of abuse. Whether the anti-Johnson material was effective or not, the Democrats won the election.<sup>68</sup>

After 1904, Johnson offered his organizational skills to the “Americans,” a reborn anti-Mormon political party financed by Thomas Kearns that numbered many old Liberals and Republicans. That party dominated city politics from 1905 through 1911, and opposition newspapers dredged up many of the same accusations against Johnson from his days as a Republican ward boss:

At every turn of the road Johnson has been the agent of the “Americans” in the red light district, he has rounded up such votes as he commands and, in turn, he has been persona grata at police court. Under the present administration he has flourished financially and waxed strong politically. The policeman who dared molest him or his friends would be in danger of losing his job; and if he were arrested, he would have little to fear from the party in power.<sup>69</sup>

At some point in late 1907, Bruce Johnson left Salt Lake City and moved to Los Angeles. Perhaps he and Christine had grown apart, as she remained in Utah; Johnson may also have grown frustrated with his lack of political clout or increasing racial segregation.<sup>70</sup> Johnson settled just north of the burgeoning Central Avenue black neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles. Many African Americans, including W. E. B. DuBois, considered Los Angeles among the best places in the country for black people to live.<sup>71</sup> Former Salt Lakers and Twenty-Fourth Infantry members Allen Allensworth and J. Gordon McPherson evidently agreed, and they achieved a measure of fame and success in California. Allensworth retired from the military and moved to Los Angeles County, where he founded the all-black town of Allensworth as an agricultural refuge.<sup>72</sup> McPherson became an evangelical preacher, nicknamed “the Fighting Parson” and the “Black Billy Sunday.”<sup>73</sup> Bruce Johnson, however, made no splash in Los Angeles. He may have retired from politics, or he may not have seemed respectable enough to capture the attention of the striving black press. At any rate, he evidently lived quietly, running a restaurant and a billiard parlor until he died in 1921.<sup>74</sup>

Johnson’s experiences and frustrations mirror those of other ambitious

<sup>68</sup> For examples of attacks on Kearns, see *Salt Lake Herald*, October 24 and 25, 1903. See also Kent Sheldon Larsen, *The Life of Thomas Kearns* (Master’s Thesis, University of Utah, 1964), esp. 101-102.

<sup>69</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, October 5, 1907.

<sup>70</sup> The 1907 R. L. Polk Salt Lake City Directory notes Johnson “moved to Los Angeles,” while Christine continued living in Salt Lake City until at least Johnson’s death in 1921; *Deseret Evening News*, June 21, 1921.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence B. De Graaf and Quintard Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. by Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western History, 2001), 19.

<sup>72</sup> Delores Nason McBroome, “Harvests of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment in Allensworth and Little Liberia,” in De Graaf, Mulroy, and Taylor, *Seeking El Dorado*, 153-54.

<sup>73</sup> *Los Angeles California Eagle*, September 5, 1914, June 19, 1915, November 13, 1915, June 24, 1921.

<sup>74</sup> *Los Angeles City Directory*, 1907-1921.

African Americans at a time of hardening racial boundaries. African Americans in Salt Lake City found that neither the national parties nor the local parties and local community offered them true political opportunity. In the end, neither Johnson nor any other black politician could deliver enough votes or draw enough support from voters themselves to gain lasting influence. This was partly demographic; there were simply too few African Americans in Utah to constitute a significant voting bloc except during extremely close elections like that of 1890.

Johnson was also the kind of old-fashioned, saloon-owning ward boss against whom “respectable” voters, white and black, had begun to recoil. Reform movements rose across the country, including prohibition and a drive to end “machine” politics (never very strong in Salt Lake City). While the “vicious methods as Plum alley and Commercial street” were welcome in the 1890s Republican Party, they no longer fit the “progressive” new century. Martin Mulvey’s experience here may be instructive. Mulvey, a white saloonkeeper whom critics often linked with Johnson, had enjoyed modest political success through the 1890s and early 1900s. Mulvey represented the Fifth Ward, also Bruce Johnson’s stronghold, on the city council; Julius Taylor campaigned for him and congratulated the “colored boys” for electing him in 1895.<sup>75</sup> Mulvey lost his city council seat in 1911, however, when Salt Lake City adopted commission government, robbing Mulvey of his traditional support by making him compete for voters at large.<sup>76</sup> Roughly half of those voters were LDS at a time when their church, especially Apostle and future President Heber J. Grant, had become much stricter about banning alcohol as part of the “Word of Wisdom.” Many non-Mormon voters disdained the saloon as well; the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union had been active in the city for two decades, and a chapter of the Anti-Saloon League was founded in 1908 to push hard for statewide prohibition. In 1911, a local option law allowed municipalities to ban alcohol, and the entire state went dry in 1916.<sup>77</sup>

Martin Mulvey at least had the “correct” skin color in his favor. R. Bruce Johnson had three things to overcome in Salt Lake City: he was non-Mormon in the Mormon capital; a saloon politician in an era of reformers; and black in a white-dominated world. The first did not necessarily bar one from a successful political career. But Johnson’s style of politics was part of the past, and successful politicians who shared his skin color were still far in the future.

<sup>75</sup> *Broad Ax*, November 2 and 9, 1895; see also *Salt Lake Herald*, August 20, 1907.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander and Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles*, 163–64. See also John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920*, second edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 156.

<sup>77</sup> Alexander, “The Adoption of a New Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom,” chap. in *Mormonism in Transition*, 258–71; Brent Grant Thompson, “Utah’s Struggle for Prohibition 1908–1917” (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1979).

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Becoming Aztlan: Mesoamerican Influence in the Greater Southwest, AD 1200-1500.* By Carroll L. Riley. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005. xii + 292 pp. Cloth, \$45.00.)

ARCHAEOLOGY HAS ALWAYS had a tense relationship with history. Important to the work of historians are extant written records and, in contemporary human activity, oral traditions. Archaeologists most often study societies that have lacked written records, and use material culture—e.g., artifacts (trash), buildings, remnants of fire and storage pits—to study and attempt to explain change in human behavior. However, archaeologists also study more recent human societies that have written records—societies with “histories” in the standard sense. Nonetheless, in the course of studying change over time, archaeologists work within chronological frameworks that are in many senses historical. Furthermore, at some point, the societies that archaeologists’ study enters “history;” either by developing written records or by encountering other societies that have such records. However, archaeological evidence—material culture—is not the same as historical evidence. The difficulty lies in linking artifacts and other remains to behaviors and historical events. Like a historian trying to use a fragmented manuscript to reconstruct an event, archaeology must rely on the fragmented remains of past activities, remains without a written narrative of any kind.

In this book, Carroll L. Riley has tried to bridge some of these gaps. Riley examines a key period—after AD 1200 up to the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores in the sixteenth century—in the greater Southwest of North America (roughly Arizona, New Mexico, Southwest Texas, and northern Mexico). Archaeologists know this as the period after the collapse of the societies that created the well-known monumental pueblos of Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, the Hohokam, and elsewhere. It is a period that is somewhat neglected by archaeologists, but it is a crucial period, because sometime during this time the native peoples of the southwest became “historical” peoples. During this time they became the modern groups such as Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, Tewa, Keresan encountered by the Spanish. This period set the stage for the history of Euroamerican contact in the Southwest.

Riley argues that during this period the greater Southwest was “becoming Aztlan.” “Aztlan” is a term the Aztec Empire located in what is now central Mexico used to describe their mythical homeland to the North. Riley adopts this term because the period after AD 1200 saw the creation of a whole new series of societies and belief systems. In particular, he argues that this period saw the beginning of the creation of a connected society across the greater Southwest, one influenced in important ways by developments in Mesoamerica. The book describes the region, what we know prior to AD 1200, and then examines the creation of a new order after AD 1200 in the Northern, Central, and Southern

portions of the area. He contends that many of the regional developments – such as the birth of what would become the Pueblo Kachina religion, long-distance trade in turquoise, animal products, pottery, participation in a type of ball game, etc. – were strongly influenced by Mesoamerican ideas from the South. For example, one of his main arguments is that the Kachina religion represents a northern expression of Mesoamerican gods such as Tlaloc and Quetzalcoatl. He then brings this incipient society into history in a series of chapters that describe the failure of “Aztlán” to fully materialize and the effects of the Spanish entrada.

Riley’s book is admirable in many respects. He takes on a crucial period often ignored by archaeologists. He marshals impressive amounts of data in an accessible manner. He has a particularly good command of the poorly known data from Northern Mexico. He integrates Northern Mexico into the American Southwest in a comprehensive manner. However, I am not fully convinced of many of his arguments regarding Mesoamerican influences in the region. The associations he draws between Mesoamerican gods and pueblo beliefs, for example, are tenuous. While I admit that there may be some connection between Tlaloc as a rain deity and rain deities in Kachina religion, this connection is so general as to almost be meaningless.

Nonetheless, Riley puts forth many stimulating ideas and the book should be worth reading by the educated layperson interested in the history and prehistory of the Southwest and by archaeologists. As a source of testable hypotheses for archaeology it is to be admired for integrating the American Southwest and Northern Mexico. The book is a good overview to a “missing” period and a worthwhile attempt to bridge archaeology and history.

MATT SEDDON

Utah Division of State History

*Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails.* By Michael L. Tate.

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. xxiv + 328 pp. Cloth, \$29.95.)

VIOLENT ACTS OF CONFLICT along the nation’s historic emigrant trails are publicly commemorated in literature, artwork, and roadside markers. Nowhere along thousands of miles of historic trail will one find signs marking the spot where Lakota women comforted a small emigrant child at his mother’s trailside funeral, or a wayside exhibit about the emigrant mother who nurtured a starving Indian girl found wandering alone in the Utah desert.

Those and many other acts of humanity are described, however, in Michael L. Tate’s *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails*, an interesting and highly readable synthesis of intercultural relations during the westward emigration. Tate’s purpose in this work is to challenge the old historical stereotype of



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Indian-versus-emigrant conflict along the trails, and to show instead that the vast majority of encounters were friendly. He acknowledges the historical reality of violence between Native Americans and emigrants, but—citing surveys of emigrant journals and accounts from American Indian oral traditions—argues that such conflict did not characterize even the most troubled years of the emigration.

Tate provides many trail-related anecdotes in support of his thesis and, importantly, weaves them into a satisfying tapestry of historical and cultural context that helps the reader understand why people reacted as they did to the words and actions of others. For example, his discussions of Native peoples' political organization, traditional methods of leadership, and perceptions of treaty negotiations go a long way toward explaining the failure of important treaties. Likewise, his review of nineteenth-century literature, art, and journalism help the reader understand emigrants' typically unfavorable views of Native Americans.

The author's careful balance of cultural perspectives and his descriptions of banal as well as benevolent behavior on the parts of both emigrants and Indians keep this work from slipping into the murky waters of political correctness. That's not to say, though, that he never gets his shoes wet. For example, negative stories about the emigrants that were handed down through Native American families are respectfully labeled as oral tradition, whereas negative stories about Indians passed down through emigrant families typically are characterized as rumor, hysteria, or examples of cultural misunderstanding.

Of greater concern are the author's several unsupported assertions regarding the treatment of white women taken captive by American Indian warriors. For example, Tate does not adequately support his statement that Indian fighters committed rape "at a frequency that fell far below the rumored level," nor his assertion that "most Indian warriors pledged abstinence while on the raiding trail...and only the most reprehensible of individuals" violated that pledge (190). How does he know it, and how can he make such generalizations across dozens of native cultures? Throughout this discussion, Tate references other scholars' opinions but does not state his own, leaving the reader to infer that he accepts their conclusions—which themselves are not well supported. Consequently, his discussion of these matters seems incomplete and simplistic. At the very least, the author needs to strengthen his statements with some convincing evidence and compelling reasoning.

Despite this small weakness, Tate succeeds in demonstrating that relationships between emigrants and Indians were complex, occasionally violent, often mutually beneficial and enjoyable, and sometimes purely compassionate. He does so in an engaging manner and with a casual writing style that both trail scholars and general readers will enjoy. But this is not just "Chicken Soup for the Trail Buff's Soul": *Indians and Emigrants* contributes historical depth, vibrant details, and important cultural insights to a well-worn story.

LEE KREUTZER  
National Park Service

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*On the Way to Somewhere Else: European Sojourners in the Mormon West, 1834-1930.* Edited by Michael W. Homer. Vol. 8, Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier series. (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006. 414 pp. Cloth, \$39.50.)

MICHAEL HOMER'S COLLECTION OF ACCOUNTS of Mormon country by travelers "on the way to somewhere else" is a distinguished addition to the "Kingdom in the West" series. The observations give us European perspectives, particularly French, Italian, German, and Scandinavian, arranged in ten chapters that move chronologically from 1834 to 1930. The editor introduces each group of selections with a highly informative essay which provides a historical context for the period's events and narratives. A "Foreword" by general editor Will Bagley, an explanation of editorial procedures and translations, and a general introduction by the editor preface the work as a whole. An Afterword, titled "Lovers and Hunters of the Picturesque," looks at "Utah in the Twenty-first Century," which has seen notable shifts in perception.

Six pages of acknowledgments suggest what an arduous undertaking over several years this has been, but there's a sense of joyous adventure as the editor strolled the bookstalls, shops, and archives wherever he found himself as he prospected for materials. The result is a work full of surprises and meticulous documentation. The research has been prodigious. The editor's familiarity especially with Italian language and culture has given him an advantage, making his erudition a comfortable fit.

Thirty-two period photographs of places and persons illustrate the volume (including eleven of the sojourners), and a number of contemporaneous drawings and cartoons enliven the pages.

The selections in Chapter 1, "The Mormonites," are brief but noteworthy for their encounters with the Mormons in their travail in Missouri and the aftermath of Nauvoo. As early as 1834 Maximilian, prince of Wied-Neuwied, observed Mormons aboard a steamboat near Williams Ferry on the Missouri River. "They complained bitterly of the unjust treatment which they had lately experienced" (33-34). The Italian cleric Samuele Carolo Mazzuchelli crossed the frozen Mississippi River from Fort Madison, Iowa, to Nauvoo in February 1843 and devoted a chapter to the visit in his memoirs on his return to Italy in 1844. He thought Joseph Smith's "looks show anything but piety; his manners are somewhat rough" (37).

An excerpt from a letter by Father Pierre Jean De Smet ends the chapter on a dramatic note: "They [the Mormons] asked me a thousand questions about the regions I had explored....I pleased them greatly from the account I gave them of it. Was that what determined them? I dare not assert it. They are there" (45).

The selections thereafter are generous, running to multiple pages, enough to

give some idea of the personality and temperament of the observer. The most familiar name may be Jules Rémy, French botanist, who was “one of the primary sources travelers used to plan their visit to Utah and the Mormons” (49). Eight letters from Rémy are taken from the *California Chronicle* in 1856, rather than the two-volume *A Journey to Great-Salt Lake City* he published in 1860 in Paris and the British edition with Julius Bentley in 1861.

Including the impressions of European converts (Chapter 3 “Gathering to Zion”) is a fine original idea, although, strictly speaking, they were not “on the way to somewhere else.” They came to stay, except for the disillusioned like the gifted Dane, John Ahmanson, who backtrailed to Omaha to be with other apostate Scandinavians where in 1876 he published *Vor Tids Muhamed* (A Mohammed of Our Time.) The chapter includes an extended selection from that volume.

More steadfast were Louis Bertrand of France, a founder of Utah’s wine culture, and the Waldensians Stephen Malan and Daniel Bertoch, whose memoirs are a vivid record of the hardships and sorrows (the death of loved ones) of immigration. “We first settlers all had confidence in our leaders, and we were satisfied with Salt Lake City” (92). Their family names are familiar in Mormon country to this day. The editor is an authority on the history of the Waldensians and in Chapter 10 reproduces a substantial account from David Bosio’s *Our Waldensians in Utah* after his visit in 1913.

A fresh new voice is the “fiery” French feminist Olympe de Joaral Audouard. An intrepid traveler and observer, she wrote *Crossing America: The Far West* (1869) “the first account written by a European woman who visited Utah” (123, 124). Her very readable observations, filled with sprightly dialogue, sympathized with the plural wives for their stout defense of polygamy compared with the infidelities of European males.

A most interesting departure from accounts by actual travelers is a selection of European fantasy accounts of the American West (Chapter 6 “Excursions in My Own Mind.”) The editor maintains that they were widely read and widely influential. “...they are key sources from which thousands of Europeans have formed their opinion of Utah and the Latter-day Saints” (232). Best known in the nineteenth century is Jules Verne, whose *Tour of the World in Eighty Days* (1872) includes an encounter with a Mormon, Elder William Hitch, and the irrepressible servant Passepartout on the way from Elko to Ogden.

Most prolific was Karl Friedrich May of Saxony, hailed as Germany’s James Fenimore Cooper. “May’s books were grounded in ‘authentic’ detail gleaned from reference books” (232). Old Shatterhand figures in the present selections; Preisegott (Praise God) Burton, a Mormon preacher, appears in one of them.

Other selections which give the present collection distinction may be found in Chapter 7, “The First European Visitors to Southern Utah.” The editor speaks of “the grand tour of Utah,” an echo of the Grand Tour of Europe common in the eighteenth century. After John Wesley Powell’s “second opening of the West” traffic increased along the Spanish/Mormon Trail and names like Wakara,

Paragonah, Parowan, Cedar City, Silver Reef, Kanab, and the Kaibab plateau entered the travelers' vocabulary.

One such traveler was Albert Tissandier, French architect and municipal official who in 1885 and 1886 spent six months in the United States and came westward "by train, coach, horseback, and foot" (265). He made more than 225 sketches of American urban and rural scenes, including the "grandiose rocky landscapes of Utah." Four illustrate the present selection; all of Tissandier's sketches may now be found in the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

European travelers were habitually curious about polygamy and during "The Last Struggle for Statehood, 1878-96" (Chapter 9) gave predictable responses to the intensifying Mormon conflict with the federal government, but one Danish editor and author indulged in a romantic gesture: he climbed one of the mountain peaks where "For a long time your thoughts roam about through the measureless space...and for many days thereafter your eyes have a special light. You have seen God's face" (317).

The French journalist Jules Huret in 1904 called the Mormons "Christians with Mohammedan instincts" (345). The railroad, most travelers concluded, was the death knell of Mormondom.

It would require many pages to adequately sample this rich and varied collection. One small stricture: it would have been helpful to put year of publication alongside the title of the published selection. And a query: Why were the selections set in reduced type, the introductions in larger type? Readers would surely reverse the order.

But let me end on a personal note: I am placing my copy of *On the Way to Somewhere Else* on the same shelf next to *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*. They make an imposing, complementary pair.

WILLIAM MULDER  
Emeritus Professor of English  
University of Utah

*Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* Edited by Patricia Lyn Scott and

Linda Thatcher. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005. xviii + 438 pp. Cloth, \$34.95; paper, \$19.95.)

ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED OF BY MEMBERS of the Utah Women's History Association in the 1980s, *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox* examines Utah's women from a variety of angles. The twelve chapters range from Cynthia Sturgis's look at the "professionalization" of farmwomen, to a study of Utah's prominent female literary figures by Gary Topping. The authors display an admirable dedication to uncovering the diverse experiences of the women of

Utah. Helen Papanikolas's chapter, "Ethnic Women, 1900–1940," looks at Native Americans, African Americans, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Italians, Japanese, and Chinese, among others. John Sillito, in "Conflict and Contributions: Women and Churches, 1847–1920," tackles not only the role of Mormon women in the church's Relief Society, but also the women of myriad Protestant denominations who came to Utah as missionaries and activists.

*Women in Utah History* seeks to discover how the women of Utah fit into the broader history of women in America. As the title suggests, the authors see Utah's women as both a paradigm, models for the nation because they "forg[ed] their own way with self-reliance and industry," and a paradox, "contradictory to the national norm" because they "embrac[ed] polygamy and submit[ed] to hierarchal Mormon Church authority" (ix). Although the majority religion and the gender roles associated with it may have set Utah's women apart from the rest of the nation in many ways, Jessie L. Embry's "Women's Life Cycles, 1850–1940," emphasizes sameness. Utah women generally cycled through childhood, marriage, and pregnancy at similar times and in similar ways as women across the country.

Clearly Utah's women have made many notable accomplishments. Kathryn MacKay, in "Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere," profiles important political figures, from Martha Hughes Cannon to Olene Walker. MacKay, along with Jill Mulvay Derr, in "Scholarship, Service, Sisterhood: Women's Clubs and Associations," identify women's high level of social and political activism in the state. On issues such as polygamy, suffrage, and education, Utah's women forged networks and worked for the good of the community (of course, on polygamy, which for some related directly to suffrage, what Utah women believed varied according to their religious perspective).

Because Utah's women varyingly conformed to and defied traditional feminine roles, the volume leaves room for debate over the extent to which the western frontier had a liberalizing, equalizing effect for women. Examining women's legal rights, Lisa Madsen Pearson and Carol Cornwall Madsen point to the "liberalizing tendencies of frontier development" as key to "the story of the legal status of women in territorial Utah" (36). Yet, Lois Kelley and Jessie Embry's comparison of polygamous and monogamous Mormon women more closely follows historian Julie Roy Jeffrey's argument that women on the western frontier brought with them powerful cultural assumptions about gender relations and strived to fulfill the "proper" feminine roles of wife and mother.

Overall, *Women in Utah History* adds immeasurably to the picture of women the state's past. It recommended reading for students of both Utah and women's history.

ANNIE HANSHEW  
University of Utah



*A Hole in the Ground with a Liar at the Top: Fraud and Deceit in the Golden*

*Age of American Mining* By Dan Plazak. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006. ix + 374 pp. Cloth, \$26.95.)

IN HIS ESTIMABLE WORK, *A Hole in the Ground With a Liar at the Top: Fraud and Deceit in the Golden Age of American Mining*, author Dan Plazak strikes it rich with his examination of the old west's most successful villains and their crimes.

Plazak shines a deft light into the dark side of America's golden age of mining, revealing levels of deceit and avarice that would embarrass an Enron executive.

Beloved as they are to history enthusiasts, the greatest outlaws of the American West were not bank and train robbers. They did not pack six-guns, hold up trains, and revel in the notoriety of dime novels. Bilking people isn't as romantic as holding them up, but it is far less dangerous and infinitely more profitable. Consequently, the Old West's most larcenous villains wore broadcloth, toted bank ledgers, and never set foot on the Owlhoot Trail.

The less glamorous and more business-like nature of the scam has allowed the exploits of many of the old west's greatest criminals to go largely unnoticed by history enthusiasts. In 1899, Thomas Lawson amassed a fortune worth fifty million dollars through mining stock swindles. Butch Cassidy was a pauper by comparison.

The crimes themselves range from the relatively innocuous to the astonishingly complex and lucrative. Native Americans sometimes showed promising ore samples to settlers willing to trade for trinkets for bogus directions to non-existent mother lodes. Larger and far more shameless frauds beat well-defined paths into the halls of Congress and Parliament.

In many cases, however, it is credentials rather than directions that were for sale, including journalists, assayers, noblemen, jurists, and even the clergy. Every title, position and reputation seems to have had a price. The celebrated Mark Twain brags, "If I don't know how to blackmail the mining companies, who does, I should like to know?" (21).

Novelist Julian Hawthorne, son of celebrated novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, bent his own literary pen to writing "scarlet promotional letters" for fictitious mines, causing the *Canadian Mining Journal* to refer to him as "a sublimated ass" (313).

Among the most credentialed charlatans is Samuel Aughey, at various times a Lutheran minister, university professor, and state geologist of Wyoming. Unfortunately for his victims, Aughey's professional accomplishments no more guaranteed his dedication to science than his ecclesiastical position committed him to honesty. He cheated people from Arkansas to Wyoming.

In an effort to separate the gullible from their money, swindlers didn't miss a

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trick. Investment offerings were floated on every venture imaginable: Wyoming diamonds, Utah tin, and even gold from saltwater.

Investors rushed headlong to pour their money into these holes, proving that human gullibility runs deeper than any ore vein. Investment frenzy shouted honest men down. As Plazak points out, "It is difficult to know where foolishness left off and swindling began, but both were there in abundance."

Of particular interest to Utah historians is the chapter, "Snow Job at the Emma Mine," a maze of double-dealing beginning in the mountain above Alta and reaching all the way to the British Isles.

Ranging from "The Comstock: the mother lode of American mining swindles" to the relatively harmless but loony behavior of Death Valley Scotty, Plazak examines the American fascination with finding treasure and, barring that, inventing it.

ROBERT KIRBY  
Herriman, Utah

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## BOOK NOTICES

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*Puebloan Ruins of the Southwest.* By Arthur H. Rohn and William M. Ferguson.

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. xiv + 320 pp. Cloth, \$60; paper, \$34.95.)

This colorfully illustrated volume explores twenty-five hundred years of Pueblo culture and architecture. The authors cover Mesa Verde in Colorado's Northern San Juan River region, Canyon de Chelly and the Grand Canyon ruins in the Kayenta region, and the Chaco Canyon, among others. The authors mix historical commentary with images and aerial photography to paint a remarkably complete picture of Pueblo life.

*The Archaeology of Chaco Canyon: An Eleventh-Century Pueblo Regional*

*Center.* Edited by Stephen H. Lekson. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2006. xvi + 544 pp. Paper, \$29.95.)

A companion to the book *Culture and Ecology of Chaco Canyon and the San Juan Basin*, this volume results from nearly four decades of research on Chaco Canyon. The exact purpose of the Chaco Canyon ruins is still debated—some archaeologists believe it to be a city, some see it as a ceremonial center. The contributors to this book address the themes of environment, organization of production, architecture, regional issues, society, and polity, among others, placing Chaco in its regional and historical context.

*After Lewis & Clark: The Forces of Change, 1806-1871.* By Gary Allen Hood.

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. 96 pp. Paper, \$24.95.)

Hood's work, *After Lewis & Clark*, narrates the period of the Lewis and Clark Expedition via the artwork that that period and event produced. A collection of paintings currently housed in the Gilcrease Museum of Tulsa, Oklahoma, this extensively and necessarily illustrated book also provides context, background, and explanations of each painting included. As artists often accompanied the explorers of the American West in the nineteenth century, these visual renderings are some of the most vivid and telling accounts of the frontier period. Hood includes sixty-seven beautifully done illustrations and accompanying text.

*By His Own Hand?: The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis.* Edited by John

D.W. Guice. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. xxi + 208 pp. Cloth,

\$24.95.)

In *By His Own Hand*, four writers analyze the death by gunshot of Meriwether Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The format and chronology of the book is that of a trial—evidence is presented by the first author, the case for suicide is made by the next, followed by an analysis of such a possibility by the third author, and finally the strengths and weaknesses of both the suicide and murder explanations are assessed. Primary source documents are included for the reader's perusal and add significant historical depth to the publication.

*The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike, 1806-1807.* Edited by Stephen

Harding Hart and Archer Butler Hulbert. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,

2006. vi + 280 pp. Cloth, \$27.95.)

In 1806 U.S. Army Lieutenant Zebulon Pike was assigned to explore the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red rivers. Along the way, Pike recorded in detail his observations about the land and the peoples he encountered. Long out of print and reissued for the bicentennial of Pike's journey through the American Southwest, this volume includes extensive commentary on the journals, as well as essays by Hart and Hulbert on the significance of the expedition and a new introduction by historian Mark L. Gardner.

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*Thomas Moran's West: Chromolithography, High Art, and Popular Taste.* By Joni L.

Kinsey. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006. xii + 260 pp. Cloth, \$45.00.)

Published as a portfolio of chromolithographs in 1876, Thomas Moran's watercolor images of Yellowstone offered many Americans their first glimpse of the country's first national park. Moran's images are reproduced in this beautiful book, along with two dozen other color plates and over one hundred black-and-white illustrations. A preeminent authority on the artist, Joni Kinsey argues that Moran's chromolithographs had an important place in American visual culture and shaped the public's fascination with the West.

*Clarence Edward Dutton: An Appraisal.* By Wallace Stegner. (Salt Lake City: The

University of Utah Press, 2006. xvi + 40 pp. Cloth, \$25.00.)

This reprint of Wallace Stegner's 1936 publication is a facsimile of a once rare and out of print book. A professor of English at the University of Utah, Stegner's account of Clarence Edward Dutton is well-written, at times gripping, and consistently accessible. The assessment of Dutton's life also touches on his geological expertise, his involvement with John Wesley Powell, and his authorial abilities.

*The Oatman Massacre: A Tale of Desert Captivity and Survival.* By Brian

McGinty. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. xiv + 258 pp. Paper, \$14.95.)

On February 18, 1851, a band of southwestern Indians attacked the family of Roys Oatman near the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers in present-day Arizona. McGinty uses firsthand accounts and recent work on nineteenth-century southwestern Indian peoples to demythologize the story of the Oatman Massacre and correct the anti-Indian bias so prominent in previous tellings.

*Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life.* By Kingsley M. Bray. (Norman: University of Oklahoma

Press, 2006. xv + 484 pp. Paper, \$34.95.)

Historian Kingsley M. Bray revisits the life and context of Crazy Horse, the Lakota chief so mythologized in Western American history. Through extensive and meticulous research in primary sources, Mr. Bray has created a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of Crazy Horse. Additionally, the narrative offers insight into the complex relationship between the United States and the Lakota Indian tribe, and the tenuous position of Native American nations in the

second half of the nineteenth century. Clearly written and well-noted, Bray's biography offers a fresh vision of this Native American leader, and the world in which he lived.

*Explorers in Eden: Pueblo Indians and the Promised Land.* By Jerold S. Auerbach.

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. vii + 205 pp. Cloth, \$34.95.)

Frank H. Cushing, an explorer and author, saw the Zuni Pueblo culture as a pristine community isolated from modernity and reminiscent of a mythical biblical past. Unable to see the ways contact with the Spanish had already changed Pueblo culture, Cushing feared that interaction with Americans would destroy a culture that had until that point been suspended in time. Using a Anglo-Americans written and visual depictions of Pueblo culture, Auerbach demonstrates how many Americans, like Cushing, responded to modern urban industrial society by imagining the Southwest as an edenic oasis and envisioning the Pueblo Indians as a wholesome biblical culture.

*The Office Journal of President Brigham Young, 1858-1863, Book D.* Edited by

Fred C. Collier (Hanna, Ut: Collier's Publishing Company, 2006. xvii + 470 pp. Cloth, \$35.00.)

This edited volume is the last of ten known office journals of Brigham Young. Written in third person by various clerks of Brigham Young, the entries are the day-to-day activities of Brigham Young and his many visitors. Most daily entries are very brief. The volume is divided into six chapters corresponding to years of the office journal. The volume contains an extensive index and includes an appendix that contains the minutes of four meetings held during the forepart of 1860 concerning doctrinal disputes between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt.

*The U.S. Army in the West, 1870-1880: Uniforms, Weapons, and Equipment.*

By Douglas C. McChristian. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. xix + 384 pp. Paper, \$24.95.)

The late nineteenth century presented a period of development, exploration, and discovery in the American West. The United States military played a pivotal role in the region at that time, and Douglas C. McChristian presents an incredibly detailed and illustrated reference of military equipment and uniforms. Largely a work of material history but with obvious insights into the cultural, social, and political implications, McChristian's book is an invaluable



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resource for the student or scholar of the American West. *The U.S. Army in the West* includes an index of illustrations as well.

*National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History.* By Polly Welts Kaufman.

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. xxxviii + 312 pp. Paper, \$22.95.)

Updated a decade after its first publication, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice* looks at the work done by women, both publicly and behind the scenes, on behalf of the nation's national parks. Although Kaufman finds that the ratio of women park rangers to men has not advanced significantly in the past ten years, she finds that women's perspectives and values—for example, inclusiveness and an emphasis on relationships and networking—have changed the national parks dramatically.

*Barn in the U.S.A.* By Bob Crittendon. (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006.

xi + 104 pp. Paper, \$24.95.)

The result of Bob Crittendon's four years of first-hand research is this full-color tour of America's barns and rural history. In 104 pages, Crittendon catalogues some of the nation's most architecturally and historically interesting barns, and offers his reader easily accessible stories and information about each. After covering nearly all of the Western United States, Crittendon finishes his book with a series of "Barn Notes," short pieces on topics from traditional barn colors to historic preservation to typical barn styles.

*Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s.* By Francisco E. Balderrama

and Raymond Rodríguez. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. x + 427 pp. Paper, \$24.95.)

In the depth of the Great Depression, desperate Americans sought a scapegoat for their economic problems settled on the Mexican community. Mexicans living and working in the United States faced laws forbidding their employment as well as calls to "get rid of the Mexicans!" The original edition of this work won the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights Award. This revised edition addresses how this event should be included in educational curriculum and the question of fiscal remuneration.

## LETTERS

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Editor,

I want to thank Rod Miller for taking the time to identify a number of errors in my book, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (SUNY Press, 2004; reviewed in your Spring 2006 issue). I take full responsibility for these errors, and apologize to my readers. Should the book be reprinted, I will be sure to recheck carefully—and credit you and Mr. Miller in the preface. Most of the errors Mr. Miller notes are relatively minor—misnaming Joseph Smith III as Joseph Smith, Jr., for instance; but some errors might, as Mr. Miller suggests, prove misleading and confusing (e.g., incorrectly locating the Haun's Mill Massacre, overestimating LDS worldwide church membership, etc.). There exist one or two more serious errors, regarding which I need to spend some time ascertaining where I went wrong.

All of the errors Mr. Miller takes care to note in his review are to be found in the first quarter (82 pages) of my book—in that portion comprised of my attempt to condense into a relatively few pages a vastly complicated history. I am not an historian, as I indicate in the work, and in pulling from countless sources to assemble this condensed history, I could have benefited from the expertise of a professional historian, yes; one versed in particular with the places and histories I survey. But herein begins my difficulty with Mr. Miller. As I write in my preface, “I assume the presence of error in this document.” This is no excuse, and was never intended to be; but in saying so, the preface illuminates the book's real aim, which is an analysis of how history is made. So when Mr. Miller indicates that the “remaining 240 pages of narrative are likewise liberally seasoned with errors of fact,” I would venture that the incidence of error in those pages will prove much rarer, as my aim there is not historical, but rather (in Part II) journalistic and (in Part III) analytical—speculative, even.

Here's a (rhetorical) question: were I to correct every error that Mr. Miller helpfully pinpoints, would this alter the gist of my larger argument about historiography? The problem here is that Mr. Miller, like a number of other reviewers, fails to grasp the issue that occupies three-quarters of my book: why is the Bear River Massacre not commonly known, and might its neglect have something to do with the mass rape that (as I argue) almost surely ensued, and which is likewise dismissed even by some of those most familiar with the massacre? For Mr. Miller and others, my attempts to shed light on the reasons why we have erased this pivotal event are “overshadowed” by my “disjointed explorations of the rape of Shoshone women by soldiers.” In fact, this very issue—that of the rape itself being “overshadowed” by the massacre, of women's history being “overshadowed” by historical inquiry that neglects women's issues—is at the core of my book. The only means by which we may unwrap the clouds of mystification, as I suggest, is by having a close look at our narrators-authors, in my case a white woman, and having a close look at (therefore) the involvement of white women in native issues generally. The book pursues the cultural repercussions white women have had

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*historically*—repercussions that persist right into the present moment, as the journalistic section of my book demonstrates.

There is, further, a venerable *social* history at stake in the last third of the book, beginning with a recitation of Susan Brownmiller's landmark insights into militaristic rape (I call it genocidal rape), and extending most recently to the discussion of anti-rape activism provided by Maria Bevacqua. One can refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of this latter—make no mention of it, silence it, in the way that rape itself is often silenced—but doing so would constitute less a “sinister conspiracy” than a cultural and social condition, a condition that has led some reviewers to assess my work along the lines that Mr. Miller offers: “as obsessed with that single aspect of the many atrocities committed at the winter camp on Beaver Creek.”

I could just as easily accuse Mr. Miller of being “obsessed” with whether it's Donner Hill or Donner Mountain (thank you, Mr. Miller; I *will* change it)—and ask Mr. Miller why he can't tolerate a *bit* of obsession about our cultural erasure of both the massacre *and* the rape. My purpose has been to identify conditions of historiography that might allow us to move, constructively, toward some greater sense of collective (collegial? certainly cultural) awareness. I am forced to note that while some aspects of history remain curiously stable (hill...mountain...), our *use* of such stagnant facts can often be, as I say in the book, an excuse to bludgeon a more *speculative* messenger, a messenger willing to ask more than she answers. Speaking now as a creative writer, I confess that what I demand from history and historians is a broader range of stylistic approaches, of challenges to their narrative conventions and mythologies—particularly objectivity, linguistic transparency, and authoritative, expertise-driven narrator-authors. These approaches will require, of course, words like *gender* and (hang onto your hats!) *feminism*.

And too, that other f-word: *forest*. As in: *forest*. *Trees*. Etc.

To be clear: I come not to dismiss the sort of careful scrutiny Mr. Miller has provided. I come only to ask that he not dismiss mine. Meanwhile, as I cannot emphasize enough, he has my gratitude for engaging in the sort of dialogue my book calls for when it says that history can never be stable; that we must work together toward a comprehensive understanding, one sensitive to how our *own* historical moment is inevitably a part of the pasts we relate. And so history, if you will, will find that gratitude officially recorded in any future editions.

With apologies again,

Kass Fleisher  
Normal, Illinois

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